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THREE
MEN IN A BOAT
(To say Nothing of the Dog)



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THREE MEN IN A BOAT

(To say Nothing of the Dog)

BY
JEROME K JEROME

SIMPLIFIED BY
G HORSLEY

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
SHERWOOD



LONGMANS

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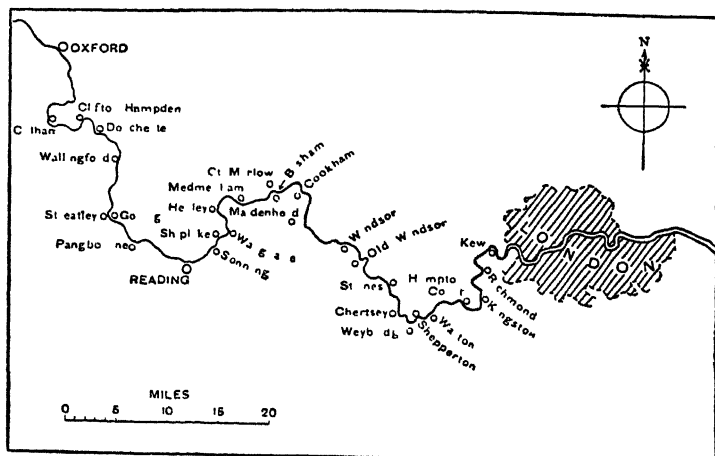
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¹The 2,000 root words of the *General Service List of English Words* of the *Interim Report on Vocabulary Selection*.

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Map of the River Thames from London to Oxford, showing the chief towns and villages mentioned in the story

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Three Men in a Boat is perhaps the work by which Jerome K. Jerome is best remembered. This amusing story deals with a holiday spent on the River Thames by three young men and a dog. Whilst it describes their adventures, much of the fun is contained in stories which one or other of these young men tell, and often they are exaggerated descriptions of adventures which are supposed to have happened to other people and which are told because they illustrate some idea which is interesting the young men at the moment. For example, on page 14 the idea of spending a week's holiday by going for a sea trip is considered to be unsatisfactory, and a very much exaggerated story concerning a sea-trip made by a relative of one of the young men is told to illustrate the idea.

Sometimes it is a little difficult to understand when a story like this begins. The story about camping out in rainy weather on page 19 is an example of this. After talking about whether they shall camp out on their holiday, one of the young men says "What shall we do if it rains?" and this leads to the imaginary description of what happens to campers in rainy weather, beginning "It is evening. You are wet through."

If you remember these points, and that the story is told by one of the young men who often, without warning, leaves the actual story of their adventures and gives one of these illustrative stories or descriptions, you will easily understand and, I think, enjoy the story.

As a humorous writer Jerome K. Jerome is in the

highest class, the excellence of his writing lies in the fact that all the incidents or situations at which we laugh are simple and human, they might happen to any of us at some time or other, they are a part of man's daily life, and Jerome makes us understand the pleasure we can obtain in regarding them as a source of merriment. But the author does not laugh at anything and everything. He can change suddenly from gaiety to seriousness, he can show us our weaknesses with the help of some seemingly comic and unimportant incident, and he can, at the same time, give us fine descriptions of famous historical scenes or of the beauties of the countryside.

Jerome K. Jerome is an English author who was born in May 1859 and died in 1927. Before he turned his attention to writing books and plays, he was a clerk, a schoolmaster and an actor. In 1889 he made a reputation for himself with *Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow*, and this was followed by *Three Men in a Boat*. Among his plays the best known is *The Passing of the Third Floor Back*, and among his later books those most widely read are *Second Thoughts of an Idle Fellow* and *Three Men on the Bummel*.

CHAPTER I

WE PLAN A HOLIDAY (I)

THERE were four of us—George, and William Samuel Harris, and myself, and Montmorency, the dog. We were sitting in my room, smoking, and talking about how bad we were—bad from a medical point of view, I mean, of course.

We were all feeling unwell, and we were getting quite nervous about it. We sat there for half an-hour, describing to each other our illnesses. I explained to George and William Harris how I felt when I got up in the morning, and William Harris told us how he felt when he went to bed, and George stood on the hearth-rug, and gave us a clever piece of acting, as an example of how he felt in the night.

George fancies ^{फैन्सिज} he is ill, but there's never anything really the matter with him, you know.

At this moment, Mrs Poppets knocked at the door to know if we were ready for supper. We smiled sadly at one another, and said we supposed we had better try to swallow a bit. ^{स्वॉलॉ} Harris said a little food often helped to check the disease, and Mrs Poppets brought the tray in, and we sat down at the table, and tried to eat a little meat and onions. ^{ऑन्यन्स} I must have been very weak at the time, because I know, after the first half-hour or so, I seemed to take no interest at all in my food—an unusual thing for me—and I didn't want any cheese. ^{चिीस्}

This duty done, we lit our pipes and began again the discussion about our state of health. What it was that was actually the matter with us, we none of us

could be sure, but the general opinion was that it had been brought on by overwork.

"What we want is rest," said Harris.

"Rest and a complete change," said George. "Change of scene, and absence of the necessity for thought, will restore the mental balance."

I agreed with George, and suggested that we should seek out some quiet and old-world place, far from the holiday crowds, and dream away a sunny week among its peaceful lanes—some half-forgotten corner, out of reach of the noisy world.

Harris said he thought it would be awful. He said he knew the kind of place I meant, where everybody went to bed at eight o'clock and you couldn't get a newspaper, and had to walk ten miles for your tobacco.

"No," said Harris, "if you want rest and change, you can't beat a sea-trip."

I objected to the sea-trip strongly. A sea-trip does you good when you are going to have a couple of months of it, but, for a week, it is useless.

You start on Monday with the idea that you are going to enjoy yourself. You wave a proud good-bye to your friends on shore, light your biggest pipe, and walk about the deck as if you were Captain Cook, Sir Francis Drake, and Christopher Columbus all rolled into one. On Tuesday, you wish you hadn't come. On Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, you wish you were dead. On Saturday, you are able to swallow a little beef tea, and to sit up on deck, and answer with a sickly smile when kind-hearted people ask you how you feel. On Sunday, you begin to walk about again, and take solid food. And on Monday morning, as, with your bag and umbrella in your hand, you stand waiting to step ashore, you begin to like it.

I remember my brother-in-law going for a short sea trip once for the benefit of his health. He took a return ticket from London to Liverpool, and when he got to Liverpool, the only thing he was anxious about was to sell that return ticket.

Another man I knew went for a week's voyage round the coast, and, before they started, the steward came to him to ask whether he would pay for each meal as he had it, or arrange beforehand for the whole number.

The steward recommended the latter, as it would be so much cheaper. He said meals for the whole week would cost two-pounds-five. He said for breakfast there would be fish, followed by a grill. Lunch was at one, and consisted of four courses. Dinner at six—soup, fish, meat, poultry, salad, sweets, cheese, and fruit. And a light meat supper at ten. My friend agreed to pay the two pounds-five, as he is a hearty eater.

Lunch came just as they were near Sheerness. He didn't feel so hungry as he thought he should, and so contented himself with a bit of boiled beef, and some strawberries and cream. He thought carefully about things during the afternoon, and at one time it seemed to him that he had been eating nothing but boiled beef for weeks, and at other times it seemed that he must have been living on strawberries and cream for years. Neither the beef nor the strawberries and cream seemed happy.

At six, they came and told him dinner was ready. The announcement aroused no enthusiasm within him, but he thought of the two-pounds five he had paid, and held on to ropes and things and went down to the dining-room. A pleasant smell of onions and hot ham, mixed with fried fish and vegetables,

greeted him at the bottom of the stairs, and then the steward came up and said

"What can I get you, sir?"

"Get me out of this," was the feeble reply

And they ran him up the stairs, propped him up, and left him

For the next four days he lived a simple life on thin biscuits and soda-water, but towards Saturday, he felt better, and began to eat dry toast and drink tea, and on Monday he was able to have a little chicken. He left the ship on Tuesday, and as it steamed away from the landing stage he gazed after it sorrowfully

"There she goes," he said, "there she goes, with two pounds' worth of food on board that belongs to me, and that I haven't had"

So I refused to agree to the sea-trip. Not, as I explained, for my own sake. I was never sea-sick. But I was afraid George might be. George said he would be all right, and would like it, but he advised Harris and me not to think of it, as he felt sure we should both be ill. Harris said that, to himself, it was always a mystery how people managed to get sick at sea, he said he had often wished to be, but had never been able. Then he told us stories of how he had gone across the Channel when the sea was so rough that the passengers had to be tied in their berths, and he and the captain were the only two living souls on board who were not ill. Sometimes it was he and the second officer who were not ill, but it was generally he and one other man. If not he and another man, then it was he by himself.

It is a curious fact, but nobody ever is sea-sick on land. At sea, you come across plenty of people very ill indeed, but I never met a man yet, on land, who had ever been sick. Where the thousands and

thousands of bad sailors that fill every ship hide themselves when they are on land is a mystery

George said

"Let's go up the river "

He said we should have fresh air, exercise and quiet, the constant change of scene would occupy our minds, and the hard work would give us a good appetite, and make us sleep well

Harris said that he didn't think George ought to do anything that would make him sleepier than he always was, as it might be dangerous. He said he didn't understand how George was going to sleep any more than he did now, when there were only twenty-four hours in each day, summer and winter alike, but thought that if he *did* sleep any more, he might just as well be dead, and so save his board and lodging.

Harris said, however, that the river would suit him perfectly. It suited me too, and Harris and I both said it was a good idea of George's, and we said it in a tone that seemed to suggest that we were surprised that George should have thought of anything so sensible. The only one who did not like the idea was Montmorency, the dog. He never cared for the river.

"It's all very well for you fellows," he seemed to say, "you like it, but I don't. There's nothing for me to do. I am not interested in scenery, and I don't smoke. If I see a rat, you won't stop, and if I go to sleep, you begin fooling about with the boat, and throw me overboard. If you ask me, I call the whole thing completely foolish."

We were three against one, however, and the motion was carried.

CHAPTER 2

WE PLAN A HOLIDAY (II)

We pulled out the maps, and discussed plans

We arranged to start on the following Saturday from Kingston Harms and I would go down in the morning, and take the boat up to Chertsey, and George, who would not be able to get away from the City till the afternoon (George goes to sleep at a bank from ten to four each day, except Saturdays, when they wake him up and put him outside at two), would meet us there

Should we "camp out" or sleep at inns?

George and I wanted to camp out We said it would be so wild and free

Slowly the golden memory of the dead sun fades from the hearts of the cold, sad clouds. Silent, like sorrowing children, the birds have ceased their song. From the dim woods on either bank, Night's ghostly army, the grey shadows, creep out noiselessly, and pass, with unseen feet, above the waving river grass, and Night, upon her gloomy throne, folds her black wings above the darkening world, and, from her ghostly palace, lit by the pale stars, reigns in stillness.

Then we run our little boat into some quiet spot, the tent is pitched, and supper cooked and eaten. Then our pipes are filled and lighted, and we talk pleasantly together, while, in the pauses of our talk, the river, playing round the boat, murmurs strange old tales and secrets, or sings low the song that it has sung for so many thousands of years

We sit there, while the moon stoops down to kiss the river with a sister's kiss, and throws her silver arms around it, and we watch it as it flows, ever singing, ever whispering, out to meet its king, the sea—till our voices die away in silence, and the pipes go out—till we, ordinary young men as we are, feel strangely full of thoughts, half sad, half sweet, and do not care or want to speak—till we laugh, and, rising, knock the ashes from our burnt-out pipes and say "Good night" Then we fall asleep beneath the great, still stars, and dream that the world is young again

Harris said

"What shall we do when it rains?"

You can never rouse Harris There is no poetry about Harris If his eyes fill with tears, you can be sure it is because he has been eating raw onions

On this occasion, however, his practical view of the matter came as a timely warning Camping out in rainy weather is not pleasant

It is evening You are wet through, and there is two inches of water in the boat, and all the things are damp You find a place on the bank that is not quite so muddy as other places you have seen and you land and pull out the tent, and two of you begin to fix it

It is soaked and heavy, and it falls heavily about you, clings round your head, and makes you mad The rain is pouring steadily down all the time It is difficult enough to fix a tent in dry weather in wet, the task becomes almost impossible for a human being Instead of helping you, it seems to you that the other man is simply playing the fool Just as you get your side beautifully fixed, he gives it a pull from his end, and spoils it all

"Here! What are you doing?" you call out

"What are *you* doing?" he replies, "let go, can't you?"

"Don't pull it, you've got it all wrong, you stupid ass!" you shout

"No, I haven't," he yells back, "let go your side!"

"I tell you you've got it all wrong!" you roar, wishing that you could get at him, and you give your ropes a pull that brings all his pegs out

"Ah, the donkey!" you hear him mutter to himself, and then comes another savage pull which unfastens all your side. You start to go round to tell him what you think of the whole business, and, at the same time, he starts round in the same direction to come and explain his views to you. And you follow each other round and round, getting angrier and angrier, until the tent falls down in a heap, and leaves you looking at each other across its ruins

At last, somehow or other, it does get up and you land the things. It is hopeless attempting to make a wood fire, so you light the stove, and crowd around that

Supper consists mainly of rainwater. The bread is two-thirds rainwater, the beefsteak-pie is rich in it, and the jam, and the butter, and the salt, and the coffee have all mixed with it to make soup. After supper, you find your tobacco is damp, and you can not smoke

When finally you go to bed and to sleep, you dream that an elephant has suddenly sat down on your chest, and that a volcano has exploded and thrown you down to the bottom of the sea—the elephant still sleeping peacefully on your bosom. You wake up feeling that something terrible has happened. Your first impression is that the end of the world has come, and then you think that this cannot be, and that it is

thieves and murderers, or else fire No help comes, however, and all you know is that thousands of people are kicking you, and you are being smothered

Somebody else seems to be in trouble too You can hear his faint cries coming from underneath your bed Determining, at all events,¹ to sell your life



We had talked enough for one night

dearly, you struggle madly, hitting out right and left with arms and legs, and yelling loudly all the time At last, something gives way, and you find your head in the fresh air Near you, you dimly observe a half-dressed ruffian, waiting to kill you, and you are preparing for a life-and-death struggle with him when you begin to realize that it is Jim

"Oh, it's you, is it?" he says, recognizing you at the same moment

¹ At all events Whatever may happen or whatever happens or in spite of what may happen.

"Yes," you answer, rubbing your eyes, "what's happened?"

"The tent has blown down, I think," he says "Where's Bill?"

Then you both raise your voices and shout for Bill, and the ground beneath you shakes, and the voice that you heard before replies from out of the ruin

"Get off my head, can't you?"

Then Bill struggles out, a muddy wreck, believing that the whole thing has been planned

In the morning you are all three speechless, owing to having caught severe colds in the night, you also feel very quarrelsome, and you speak angrily to each other in hoarse whispers during the whole of breakfast time

We therefore decided that we would sleep out on fine nights, and go to an inn when it was wet, or when we felt we needed a change

Montmorency welcomed this decision with much approval. He does not like being quiet and alone, give him something noisy. To look at Montmorency you would imagine that he was an angel sent upon the earth in the shape of a small dog. There is an innocent expression in his eyes that has been known to bring tears into the eyes of pious old ladies and gentlemen. But I had not had him long before I knew how wrong I was. I had to pay for about a dozen chickens that he had killed, I had to drag him, growling and kicking, by his neck, out of a hundred street fights, I had a dead cat brought for me to examine by an angry female, who called me a murderer, I was taken to court by the man next door for allowing to go free a savage dog that had kept him imprisoned in his own tool-shed, afraid to put his nose out of the door, for more than two hours on a cold night. After

all these things had happened, I began to think that perhaps Montmorency was not such an angel as I had thought

Having thus agreed about our sleeping arrangements, the only thing left to discuss was what we should take with us. We had begun to argue about this, when Harris said that we had talked enough for one night, and that our other problems could be postponed until the following night

CHAPTER 3

WE DECIDE WHAT WE NEED TO TAKE

ON the following evening we again met to discuss and arrange our plans. Harris said

"Now the first thing to settle is what to take with us. You get a bit of paper and write down J, and you get the grocery catalogue, George, and somebody give me a pencil, and then I'll make out a list."

That is just like Harris—so ready to take the burden of everything himself, and put it on the backs of other people.

He always reminds me of my Uncle Podger. When my Uncle Podger agreed to do anything, there was always a great disturbance. A picture had come home from the frame-maker's, and was standing in the dining-room, waiting to be put up. Aunt Podger asked what was to be done with it, and Uncle Podger said

"Oh, you leave that to *me*. Don't worry about that. I'll do all that."

Then he took off his coat and began. He sent the girl out for some nails, and then one of the boys after her to tell her what size to get, and, after that, he gradually started the whole house doing things

"Now you get me my hammer, Will," he shouted, "and you bring me the ruler, Tom, and I shall want the step ladder, and I had better have a kitchen chair, too, and Jim, you run round to Mr Goggles, and ask him to lend me his spirit-level. Don't you go, Maria, because I shall want somebody to hold the light, and when the girl comes back she must go out again for a piece of picture-cord, and Tom—where's Tom?—Tom, you come here, I shall want you to hand me up the picture."

Then he lifted up the picture, and dropped it, and it came out of the frame, and he tried to save the glass, and cut himself, and then he jumped round the room, looking for his handkerchief. He could not find his handkerchief, because it was in the pocket of the coat he had taken off, and he did not know where he had put the coat, and all the house had to stop looking for his tools, and start looking for his coat, while he danced round and hindered them.

"Doesn't anybody in the whole house know where my coat is? I never saw such people in my life. Six of you!—and you can't find a coat that I put down not five minutes ago! Well, of all the——"

Then he got up, and found that he had been sitting on it, and called out

"Oh, you can stop looking. I've found it myself now. I might as well ask the cat to find anything as expect you people to find it."

When he had spent half an hour in tying up his finger, and when a new glass had been got, and the tools, and the ladder, and the chair, and the candle

had been brought, he made another attempt, the whole family standing round in a semi-circle ready to help. Two people had to hold the chair, and a third helped him up on it, and held him there, and a fourth handed him a nail, and a fifth passed him the hammer, and he took hold of the nail, and dropped it.

"There!" he said, in an injured tone, "now the nail's gone."

We all had to go down on our knees and search for it, while he stood on the chair, and wanted to know if he was to be kept there all the evening.

The nail was found at last, but by that time he had lost the hammer.

"Where's the hammer? What did I do with the hammer? Great heavens! Six of you, standing foolishly round there, and you don't know what I did with the hammer."

✂ We found the hammer for him, and then he had lost sight of the mark he had made on the wall, where the nail was to go in, and each of us had to climb up on the chair beside him, and see if we could find it, and we each discovered it in a different place, and he called us all fools, one after another, and told us to get down. Then he took the ruler, and re-measured, and found that he wanted half thirty-one and three eighths inches from the corner, and tried to do the sum in his head, and went mad. We all tried to do it in our heads, and all arrived at different answers, and sneered at one another. In the confusion, the original number was forgotten, and Uncle Podger had to measure it again.

He used a piece of string this time, and, just when he was leaning over the chair at an angle of forty-five degrees, trying to reach a point three inches beyond what was possible for him to reach, the string slipped

and down he slid on to the piano, a fine musical effect being produced by the suddenness with which his head and body struck all the notes at the same time

At last Uncle Podger got the spot fixed again, and put the point of the nail on it with his left hand, and took the hammer in his right hand And, with the first blow, he smashed his thumb, and dropped the hammer, with a yell, on somebody's toes

Aunt Maria mildly observed that next time Uncle Podger was going to hammer a nail into the wall, she hoped he would let her know in time, so that she could make arrangements to go and spend a week with her mother while it was being done

Then he had another try, and, at the second blow, the nail went straight through the plaster, and half the hammer after it, and Uncle Podger was thrown against the wall with force nearly sufficient to flatten his nose We had to find the ruler again, and the string, and a new hole had to be made, and, about midnight, the picture was up—very crooked and insecure, the wall for yards around looking as if it had been badly smoothed down, and everybody worn out and wretched, except Uncle Podger

“There you are,” he said, looking at the disorder he had caused with evident pride “Some people would have had a workman in to do a little thing like that!”

Harris will be just that sort of man when he grows older, and I told him so I said that I could not permit him to take so much labour on himself I said

“No, *you* get the paper and the pencil and the catalogue, and George write down, and I'll do the work”

The first list we made had to be thrown away The River Thames was not big enough for a boat sufficiently large to take the things we had written down as

indispensable, so we tore up the list, and looked at one another

George said

"You know we are on the wrong track¹ altogether. We must not think of the things we could do with, but only of the things that we can't do without."

George is really quite sensible at times. His remark was full of wisdom, not only as regards the present case, but with reference to our trip up the river of life. How many people, on that voyage, load up the boat till it is ever in danger of sinking with a store of foolish things which they think necessary to the pleasure and comfort of the trip, but which are really only useless and unimportant. Let your boat of life be light, packed with only what you need—a homely home and simple pleasures, one or two friends worth the name, someone to love and some one to love you, a cat, a dog, and a pipe or two, enough to eat and enough to wear. You will find the boat easier to pull then. You will have time to think as well as to work, and time to drink in life's sunshine.

We left the list to George, and he began it

"We won't take a tent," suggested George, "we will have a boat with a cover. It is ever so much simpler, and more comfortable."

It seemed a sensible idea, and we adopted it. George said that in that case we must take a rug each, a lamp, some soap, a brush and comb (between us), a toothbrush (each), some shaving materials and a couple of big towels for bathing. We all talked as if we were going to have a long swim every morning. George said it was so pleasant to wake up in the morning and plunge into the clear, fresh river. Harris said that there was nothing like a swim before breakfast to

¹ On the wrong track. A track—a path or a mark left by a foot. To be on the wrong track = to be thinking or speaking of something different from another person's idea. to be away from the proper subject

give you an appetite He said it always gave him an appetite George said that if it was going to make Harris eat more than Harris usually ate, then he would protest against Harris having a bath at all We agreed finally that we should take three bath towels, so as not to keep each other waiting

For clothes, George said two suits of flannel would be enough, as we could wash them in the river when they got dirty Harris and I were weak enough to fancy that he knew what he was talking about, and that three respectable young men, with no experience in washing, could really clean their own shirts and trousers in the River Thames with a bit of soap We were to learn in the days to come, when it was too late, that George could evidently have known nothing whatever about the matter If you could have seen these clothes afterwards—but that belongs to the future

George impressed upon us¹ to take a change of underclothes and plenty of socks, in case we got upset, also plenty of handkerchiefs, as they would be useful to wipe things, and a pair of leather boots as well as our boating shoes, as we should want them if we got upset

CHAPTER 4

THE PROBLEMS OF FOOD AND PACKING

THEN we discussed the food question George said "Begin with breakfast" (George is so practical) "Now for breakfast we shall want a frying-pan"—

¹ I impressed upon us To impress = to press on, or fix in the mind Impressed upon us = told us with force or again and again, so that we should not forget

(Harris said it was indigestible, but we merely urged him not to be an ass, and George went on)—“a teapot and a kettle, and a methyated spirit stove”

“No oil,” said George, with a significant look, and Harris and I agreed

We had taken an oil stove once, but never again. It had been like living in an oil-shop for a week. The oil got into everything. We kept the stove in the nose of the boat, and, from there, the oil flowed down to the rudder, filling with its smell the whole boat and everything in it. It spoilt both the scenery and the atmosphere. Sometimes a westerly oily wind blew, and at other times an easterly oily wind, and sometimes it blew a northerly oily wind, and maybe a southerly oily wind, but whether it came from the Arctic snows or from the waste of the desert sands, it came alike to us laden with the fragrance of paraffin oil.

We tried to get away from it at Marlow. We left the boat by the bridge, and took a walk through the town to escape it, but it followed us. The whole town was full of oil. We passed through the churchyard, and it seemed as if the people had been buried in oil. The High Street smelt overpoweringly of oil, we wondered how people could live in it. And we walked miles upon miles out Birmingham way, but it was no use, the country was steeped in oil.

Therefore, in the present instance, we confined ourselves to methyated spirits.

For other breakfast things, George suggested eggs and bacon, which were easy to cook, cold meat, tea bread and butter, and jam. For lunch, he said, we could have biscuits, cold meat, bread and butter, and jam—but *no cheese*. Cheese, like oil, makes too much of itself. It wants the whole boat to itself. It goes through the basket in which the food is packed, and

gives a cheesy flavour to everything else there. You can't tell what you are eating, it all seems cheese. There is too much smell about cheese.

I remember a friend of mine buying a couple of cheeses at Liverpool. They were splendidly ripe, with a smell that might have knocked a man over at two hundred yards. I was in Liverpool at the time, and my friend said that if I didn't mind he would get me to take them back with me to London, as he should not be coming up for a day or two himself, and he did not think the cheeses ought to be kept much longer.

"Oh, with pleasure, dear boy," I replied, "with pleasure."

I called for the cheeses, and took them away in a cab. I put the cheeses on the top, and the broken-down-looking horse started off very slowly. But, as we turned the corner, the wind carried the scent of the cheeses full on to him. It woke him up, and, with a snort of terror, he dashed off as fast as his legs would carry him. It took two porters as well as the driver to hold him at the station, and I do not think they would have done it, even then, had not one of the men had the presence of mind to put a handkerchief over his nose, and light a piece of brown paper.

I took my ticket, and marched proudly up the platform, with my cheeses, the people falling back respectfully on either side. The train was crowded, and I had to get into a carriage where there were already seven other people. One bad-tempered old gentleman objected, but I got in, nevertheless, and, putting my cheeses upon the rack, squeezed down with a pleasant smile, and said it was a warm day. A few minutes passed, and then the old gentleman began to move about uncomfortably.

"Very close in here," he said

"Quite unpleasantly so," said the man next to him

And then they both began sniffing, and, at the third sniff, they caught it right on the chest, and rose up without another word and went out. And then a stout lady got up, gathered up a bag and eight parcels and went. The remaining four passengers sat on for a while, until three of them made a dash for the door at the same time, and hurt themselves. I smiled at the only other passenger who was left, and said I thought we were going to have the carriage to ourselves, and he laughed pleasantly, and said that some people got upset over a little thing. But even he grew strangely quiet and sad after the train had started, and so, when we reached Crewe, I asked him to come and have a drink. He accepted, and after we had pushed our way into the refreshment room, he asked for half a crown's worth of brandy. And he went off by himself after he had drunk it and got into another carriage.

Upon my arrival in London, I took the cheeses down to my friend's house. When his wife came into the room she smelt round for an instant. Then she said

"What is it? Tell me the worst "सबसे बुरा"

I said, "It's cheeses. Tom bought them in Liverpool, and asked me to bring them up with me."

My friend was detained in Liverpool longer than he expected, and, three days later, as he hadn't returned home, his wife called on me. She said

"What did Tom say about those cheeses?"

I replied that he had directed they were to be kept in a moist place, and that nobody was to touch them.

She said, "Nobody's likely to touch them. Had he smelt them?"

I thought he had, and added that he seemed very fond of them

"You think he would be upset," she asked, "if I gave a man a pound to take them away and bury them?"

I answered that I thought he would never smile again

An idea struck her. She said

"Do you mind keeping them for him? Let me send them round to you."

"Madam," I replied, "for myself I like the smell of cheese, and the journey the other day with them from Liverpool I shall ever look back upon as a happy ending to a pleasant holiday. But, in this world, we must consider others. The lady under whose roof I live is a widow, and she has a strong objection to being what she calls 'put upon'. The presence of your husband's cheeses in her house she would, I feel, regard as a 'put upon', and it shall never be said that I put upon the widow and the orphan."

"Very well, then," said my friend's wife, rising, "all I have to say is, that I shall take the children and go to an hotel until those cheeses are eaten. I refuse to live any longer in the same house with them."

The hotel bill came to fifteen guineas, and my friend, after reckoning everything up, found that the cheeses had cost him eight-and-sixpence a pound. He said he dearly loved cheeses, but it was too expensive for him, so he determined to get rid of them. He threw them into the canal, but had to fish them out again as the boatmen complained. They said it made them feel quite faint. Finally, he got rid of them by taking them down to a seaside town and burying them on the beach. It gained the place quite a reputa-

tion Visitors said they had never noticed before how strong the air was, and weak-chested people used to visit there for years afterwards

And so, though I am very fond of cheese, I agreed that George was right in deciding not to take any

"We shan't want any tea," said George, "but we'll have a good big meal at seven—dinner, tea and supper combined"

We made a list of the things to be taken before we parted that night The next day, which was Friday, we got them all together, and met in the evening to pack We got a large bag for the clothes, and a couple of big baskets for the food and the cooking utensils We moved the table up against the window, piled everything in a heap in the middle of the floor, and sat round and looked at it

I said I'd pack उत्सर्जित

I am rather proud of my packing Packing is one of those many things that I feel I know more about than any other person living I impressed the fact upon George and Harris, and told them that they had better leave the whole matter entirely to me They agreed to this suggestion with extraordinary eagerness George lit his pipe and spread himself over the easy chair, and Harris put his leg on the table and lit a cigar

This was hardly what I intended What I had meant of course was that I should be in charge of the job, and that Harris and George should follow my instructions Their taking it in the way they did annoyed me There is nothing that does vex me more than seeing other people sitting about doing nothing when I'm working

† However, I did not say anything, but started the packing It seemed a longer job than I had thought it

was going to be, but I got the bag finished at last, and I sat on it and strapped it

"Aren't you going to put the boots in?" said Harris

I looked round and found that I had forgotten them. That's just like Harris. He couldn't have said a word¹ until I'd got the bag shut and strapped, of course. George laughed—one of those maddening, senseless laughs of his. They make me so wild.

I opened the bag and packed the boots in, and then, just as I was going to close it, a horrible idea occurred to me. Had I packed my toothbrush? I don't know how it is, but I never do know whether I've packed my toothbrush.

Of course, I had to turn everything out now, and, of course, I could not find it. I found George's and Harris's eighteen times over, but I couldn't find mine. I put the things back one by one, and held everything up and shook it. Then I found it inside a boot. I repacked once more.

When I had finished, George asked if the soap was in. I said that I didn't care whether the soap was in or whether it wasn't, and I banged the bag to close it, strapped it, and found that I had packed my tobacco-pouch in it and had to reopen it. It got shut finally at 10.5 p.m., and then there remained the baskets to pack. Harris said that he and George had better do the rest, I agreed and sat down, and they started.

They began in a light-hearted spirit, evidently intending to show me how to do it. I made no comment, I only waited. When George is hanged, Harris will be the worst packer in this world, and I looked at the piles of plates and cups, and kettles, and bottles, and

¹ He couldn't have said a word = It would have been impossible for him to say anything

Could have = would have been able

Couldn't have = would *not* have been able

jars, and pies, and stoves, and cakes, and tomatoes etc, and felt that this would soon become exciting

It did. They started with breaking a cup. Then Harris packed the jam on top of a tomato and squashed it, and they had to pick out the tomato with a teaspoon. Then it was George's turn, and he trod on the butter. I didn't say anything, but I came over and sat on the edge of the table and watched them. That annoyed them more than anything I could have said. It made them nervous and excited, and they stepped on things, and put things behind them, and then couldn't find them when they wanted them, and they packed the pies at the bottom, and put heavy things on top, and smashed the pies in. They upset salt over everything, and I never saw two men do more with a pound of butter than they did. After George had got it off his slipper, they tried to put it in the kettle. It wouldn't go in, and what *was* in wouldn't come out. They did scrape it out at last, and put in on a chair, and Harris sat on it, and it stuck to him, and they went looking for it all over the room.

"I'll swear I put it down on that chair," said George, staring at the empty seat.

"I saw you do it myself, not a minute ago," said Harris.

Then they started round the room again looking for it, and then they met again in the centre, and stared at one another.

"Most extraordinary ^{असुकरा} thing I ever heard of," said George.

"So mysterious," said Harris.

Then George got round at the back of Harris and saw it.

"Why, here it is all the time," he exclaimed indignantly.

"Where?" cried Harris, turning quickly round

"Stand still, can't you?" roared George, flying after him

And they got it off, and packed it in the teapot

Montmorency was in it all, of course Montmorency's ambition in life is to get in the way If he can get in anywhere where he particularly is not wanted, and make people mad, and have things thrown at his head, then he feels that his day has not been wasted He came and sat down on things, just when we wanted to pack them, and he seemed to think that, whenever Harris or George reached out his hand for anything, it was his cold, damp nose that they wanted He put his leg into the jam, and he attacked the teaspoons, and he pretended that the lemons were rats, and got into the basket and killed three of them, before Harris drove him away with the frying-pan

The packing was done at 12 50, and Harris sat on the biggest basket, and said he hoped that nothing would be found broken George said that if anything was broken it *was* broken, which reflection seemed to comfort him He also said he was ready for bed We were all ready for bed Harris was to sleep with us that night, and we went upstairs George said

"What time shall I wake you fellows?"

Harris said, "Seven"

I said, "No—six," because I wanted to write some letters At last we agreed to make it half-past six

"Wake us at 6 30, George," we said George made no answer, and we found, on going over, that he had been asleep for some time, so we placed the bath where he could fall into it on getting out in the morning, and went to bed ourselves

CHAPTER 5

WE START ON OUR HOLIDAY

It was Mrs Poppets that woke me up next morning
She said

"Do you know that it's nearly nine o'clock,
sir?"

"Nine o'what?" I cried, starting up

"Nine o'clock," she replied, through the keyhole
"I thought you were oversleeping "

I woke Harris, and told him He said

"I thought you wanted to get up at six?"

"So I did," I answered, "why didn't you wake
me?"

"How could I wake you, when you didn't wake
me?" he retorted "Now we shan't get on the water
till after twelve I wonder you take the trouble to get
up at all "

"Um," I replied, "it's lucky for you that I do If I
hadn't woke you, you'd have lain there for the whole
fortnight "

Then, suddenly, we saw George There he lay—
the man who had wanted to know what time he
should wake us—on his back, with his mouth wide
open, and his knees stuck up At the sight, Harris
and I forgot our own dispute We flew across the
room, pulled all the clothes off him, Harris gave him
a mighty blow with a slipper, I shouted in his ear, and
he awoke

"What is the matter?" he inquired, sitting up

"Get up, you fathead," roared Harris "It's a
quarter to ten "

"What," he shrieked, jumping out of bed into the bath, "who on earth put that thing there?"

We told him he must have been a fool not to see the bath

We finished dressing, and, when it came to the extras, we remembered that we had packed the tooth-brushes and the brush and comb, and we had to go downstairs and fish them out of the bag. When we had done that, George wanted his shaving things. We told him that he would have to go without shaving that morning, as we weren't going to unpack that bag again for him.

We went downstairs for breakfast. Montmorency had invited two other dogs to come and see him off, and they were passing the time by fighting on the doorstep. We calmed them with an umbrella and sat down to eat.

George got hold of the newspaper, and read us the boating accidents and the weather forecast,¹ which foretold "rain, cold, wet to fine" (whatever that may mean), "occasional thunderstorms, east wind."

I do think that, of all the silly foolishness by which we are troubled in this life, this "weather-forecast" business is the worst.

It "forecasts" exactly what happened yesterday or the day before, and exactly the opposite of what is going to happen to-day.

I remember a holiday of mine being completely ruined one late autumn by our paying attention to the weather report in the newspaper. "Heavy showers, with thunderstorms, may be expected to-day," it would say on Monday, and so we would

¹ Weather forecast: an account of the weather to be expected in the next day or two.

give up our picnic,¹ and stop indoors all day, waiting for the rain. People would pass the house in coaches, as jolly and merry as could be, the sun shining, and not a cloud to be seen.

"Ah," we said, as we stood looking out at them through the window, "won't they come home soaked!"

We smiled to think how wet they were going to get, and came back and stirred the fire, round which we sat with our books. By twelve o'clock, with the sun pouring into the room, the heat became quite terrible, and we wondered when those heavy showers and thunderstorms were going to begin.

"Ah! they'll come in the afternoon, you'll find," we said to each other. "Oh, won't those people get wet. What a joke!"

At one o'clock the landlady would come in to ask if we weren't going out, as it seemed such a lovely day.

"No, no," we replied, with a knowing laugh, "not we. We don't mean to get wet—no, no."

When the afternoon was nearly gone, and still there was no sign of rain, we tried to cheer ourselves up with the idea that it would start suddenly, just as people were beginning their homeward journey and were out of reach of any shelter, and that thus they would get wetter than ever. But not a drop of rain ever fell, and it finished a beautiful day, and a lovely night after it.

The next morning we would read that it was going to be a "warm, fine to set-fair day, much heat", and we would dress ourselves in our thinnest clothes, and go out. Half an hour after we had started, it would commence to rain hard, a bitterly cold wind would

¹ Picnic a short journey for pleasure, with a meal eaten out of doors

spring up, and both would keep on steadily for the whole day, and we would come home with colds and rheumatism, and go to bed

The weather is a thing that I can never understand

It was too bright and sunny on this particular morning for George's readings to upset us, and so, finding that he could not make us wretched, and was only wasting his time, he took the cigarette that I had carefully rolled for myself, and left us

After breakfast we carried out our luggage on to the doorstep, and waited for a cab. There seemed to be a good deal of luggage, when we put it all together. There was the Gladstone bag and the small hand-bag, and the two large baskets of food, and a large roll of rugs, and four or five overcoats and raincoats, and a few umbrellas, and then there was a melon by itself in a bag, because it was too large to go anywhere else, and a couple of pounds of grapes in another bag, and a frying-pan, which, being too long to pack, we had wrapped round with brown paper.

It certainly looked a lot, and Harris and I began to feel rather ashamed of it, though why we should be I can't see. No cab came by, but a number of boys did, and became interested in the show, apparently, and stopped.

Biggs's boy was the first to come round. Biggs is our greengrocer, and he seems to find all the most villainous errand-boys that civilization has yet produced. When this example came round the corner he was evidently in a great hurry, but, on catching sight of Harris and me, and Montmorency, and the things he went much more slowly and stared. Harris and I frowned at him, without effect. He came to a dead stop, a yard from our step, and, leaning up against the railings, fixed us with his eye.

In another moment, the grocer's boy passed on the opposite side of the street. Biggs's boy called to him

"Hi, ground floor o' 42 is moving"

The grocer's boy came across, and took up a position on the other side of the step. Then the young gentleman from the boot-shop stopped, and joined Biggs's boy, others appeared and halted, one by one

"They're not going to starve, are they?" said the gentleman from the boot-shop

"Ah. You'd want to take a thing or two with *you*," replied another, "if you were going to cross the Atlantic in a small boat"

By this time, quite a small crowd had collected, and people were asking each other what was the matter. The younger part of the crowd held that it was a wedding, and pointed out Harris as the bridegroom, while the elder and more thoughtful inclined to the idea that it was a funeral, and that I was probably the corpse's brother

At last, an empty cab arrived and, packing ourselves and our belongings into it, and getting rid of a couple of Montmorency's friends, who had evidently sworn never to leave him, we drove away amidst the cheers of the crowd, Biggs's boy throwing a carrot after us for luck

We got to Waterloo Station at eleven, and asked where the eleven-five started from. Of course nobody knew, nobody at Waterloo ever does know where a train is going to start from, or where it is going to when it does start, or anything about it. The porter who took our things thought it would go from number two platform, while another porter, with whom we discussed the question, had heard it said that it would go from number one. The station-master, on

the other hand, was certain that it would start from number four

To put an end to the matter, we went upstairs, and asked the traffic manager, and he told us that he had just met a man, who said that he had seen it at number three platform. We went there, and were told that the train waiting there was believed to be the Southampton express.

Then our porter said that he thought that he recognized the train standing at another platform. Away we went again, and saw the engine-driver, and asked him if he was going to Kingston. He said that he wasn't sure, but he thought he was. We slipped half a crown into his hand, and begged him to be the eleven-five for Kingston.

"Nobody will ever know, on this line," we said, "what you are, or where you are going. You know the way, so slip off quietly and go to Kingston." ¶

"Well, I don't really know," replied the noble fellow, "but I suppose some train has got to go to Kingston, and I'll do it."

Thus we got to Kingston by the London and South-Western Railway.

We learnt, afterwards, that the train we had come by was really the Exeter mail, and that they had spent hours at Waterloo looking for it and nobody knew what had become of it.

Our boat was waiting for us at Kingston just below the bridge, and to it we made our way, and round it we stored our luggage, and into it we stepped.

"Are you all right, sir?" said the man.

"Right it is," we answered, and out we shot on to the waters which, for a fortnight, were to be our home.

CHAPTER 6

IN THE MAZE AT HAMPTON COURT

It was a glorious morning, late spring or early summer, and everything made a sunny picture, so bright but calm, so full of life, and yet so peaceful, that, as Harris was rowing steadily, I lay back and dreamed happily of Kingston in bygone days. Soon, however, Harris said that he had done enough and proposed that I should take a turn. We passed Hampton Court, looking so peaceful and quiet, and Harris interrupted my pleasant thoughts by asking me if I'd ever been in the maze¹ there. He said he went in once to show somebody else the way. He had studied it on a map, and it was so simple that it seemed foolish. Harris said that he thought the map must have been drawn as a joke, because it wasn't a bit like the real thing, and only misleading. It was a cousin from the country that Harris took in. He said

"We'll just go in here, so that you can say that you've been, but it's very simple, it's silly to call it a maze. You keep on taking the first turning to the right. We'll just walk round for ten minutes, and then go and get some lunch."

They met some people soon after they had got inside, who said they had been there for three-quarters of an hour, and had had almost enough of it. Harris told them that they could follow him, if they

¹ Maze. A large number of paths turning in many different directions and often separated by high walls or hedges, so that it is difficult to find the way out.

liked, he was just going in, and then should turn round and come out again. They said it was very kind of him, and followed.

They picked up various other people who wanted to get out, as they went along, until nearly all the persons in the maze were following them. People who had given up all hopes of ever getting out, or of ever seeing their homes and friends again, took courage at the sight of Harris and his party, and joined the procession, asking God to bless him. Harris said that he should judge there must have been twenty people following him, in all, and one woman with a baby, who had been there all the morning, insisted on taking his arm, for fear of losing him.

Harris kept on turning to the right, but it seemed a long way, and his cousin said he supposed it was a very big maze.

"Oh, one of the largest in Europe," said Harris.

"Yes, it must be," replied the cousin, "because we've walked more than two miles already."

Harris began to think it rather strange himself, but he went on his way until, at last, they passed the half of a small cake on the ground that Harris's cousin swore he had noticed there seven minutes before. Harris said "Oh, impossible," but the woman with the baby said, "Not at all," as she herself had taken it from the child, and thrown it down there just before she met Harris. She also added that she wished she had never met Harris, and expressed an opinion that he had deceived them all. That made Harris mad, and he produced his map, and explained his ideas.

"The map may be all right," said one of the party, "if you know whereabouts in it we are now."

Harris didn't know, and suggested that the best thing to do would be to go back to the entrance and

begin again. For the beginning again part of it there was not much enthusiasm, but everybody agreed about going back to the entrance, and so they turned and walked after Harris again, in the opposite direction. About ten minutes more passed, and then they found themselves in the centre.

Harris thought at first of pretending that that was what he had been aiming at, but the crowd looked dangerous, and he decided to treat it as an accident.

Anyhow, they had something to start from then. They knew where they were, and the map was once more consulted, and the thing seemed simpler than ever, and off they started for the third time.

And three minutes later they were back in the centre again.

After that they couldn't get anywhere else. Which ever way they turned brought them back to the middle. It became so regular at last, that some of the people stopped there, and waited for the others to take a walk round, and come back to them. Harris pulled out his map again after a while, but the sight of it only enraged the mob. Harris said that he had a feeling that he had become very unpopular.

At last they were forced to shout loudly for the keeper, and the man came and climbed up the ladder outside and shouted out instructions to them. But, by this time they were all unable to understand anything, and so the man told them to wait where they were, and he would come to them.

He was a young keeper, as it happened, and new to the business, and when he got in, he couldn't get to them, and then *he* got lost. They caught sight of him, every now and then, rushing about on the other side of the hedge, and he would see them, and rush to get to them, and they would wait for about five minutes,

and then he would reappear again in exactly the same place, and ask them where they had been

They had to wait until one of the old keepers came back from his dinner before they could get out

Harris said he thought it was a very fine maze, so far as he could judge, and we agreed that we would try to persuade George to go into it, on our way back

We had to meet George at Shepperton by five o'clock, and when I reminded Harris of this he suddenly became angry, and said all kinds of unpleasant things about George. Why was George to fool about all day, and leave us to pull this heavy old boat up and down the river by ourselves to meet him? Why couldn't George come and do some work? Why couldn't he have got the day off, and come with us? What good was he at the bank?

"I never see him doing any work there," continued Harris, "whenever I go in. He sits behind a bit of glass, trying to look as if he was doing something. What's the good of a man behind a bit of glass? I have to work for my living. Why can't he work? What use is he there? I don't believe George is at the bank at all. He's playing about somewhere, that's what he's doing, leaving us to do all the work."

It is always best to let Harris say what he's got to say at a time like this. Then he pumps himself out, and is quiet afterwards.

CHAPTER 7

CHIEFLY ABOUT COMIC SONGS

WE stopped under the willow trees by Kempton Park, and lunched. It is a pretty little spot there, a pleasant stretch of grass running along by the water's edge and overhung by willows. We had just commenced the third course—the bread and jam—when a gentleman in shirt sleeves and smoking a short pipe came along and wanted to know if we knew that we were trespassing¹. We said that we hadn't thought much about it until then, but that, if he assured us on his word as a gentleman that we had no right there, we would, without any hesitation, believe him.

He gave us the assurance, and we believed him, but he still waited and seemed to be dissatisfied, so we asked if there was anything more that we could do for him, and Harris, who has a friendly nature, offered him a piece of bread and jam. He refused it quite angrily and added that it was his duty to turn us off.

Harris said that if it was a duty it ought to be done, and asked the man what he thought was the best way of performing it. Harris is a large powerfully-built man, and looks hard and bony, and the man looked him up and down, and said that he would go and ask his master's advice, and then come back and throw us both into the river.

Of course, he never came back and, of course, all he really wanted was a shilling. There are quite a large number of riverside roughs who make an income during the summer, by getting money out of weak

¹ Trespassing. Going on to another person's land without permission.

mind people in this way. The proper thing to do is to offer your name and address, and leave the owner, if he really has anything to do with the matter, to summon you to court and there prove what damage you have done to his land by sitting down on a very small piece of it. But most people are so lazy and timid that they prefer to pay what they are asked rather than put an end to it all by showing a little firmness.

Sometimes, of course, the owners themselves are to blame. Some of these men would like to close the River Thames altogether. They actually do this along the smaller streams. They drive posts into the bed of the stream, and draw chains across from bank to bank, and nail huge notice-boards on every tree. The sight of these notice-boards makes me mad with anger. I feel I want to tear each one down, and hammer it over the head of the man who put it up, until I have killed him, and then I would bury him, and put the board over the grave instead of a stone.

I mentioned these feelings of mine to Harris, and he said he would like to do more than that. He said he not only wanted to kill the man who had caused the board to be put up, but that he should like to murder his family, and then burn down his house, after which he would go and sing a comic song on the ruins.

You have never heard Harris sing a comic song, or you would understand what a dreadful threat this was. It is one of Harris's fixed ideas that he *can* sing a comic song, the fixed idea, on the contrary, among those of Harris's friends who have heard him try, is that he can't, and never will be able to, and that he ought not to be allowed to try.

When Harris is at a party, and is asked to sing, he

replies "Well, I can only sing a *comic* song, you know", and he says it in a voice which seems to say that his singing of *that*, however, is a thing you ought to hear at least once in your life

"Oh, that is nice," says the hostess "Do sing one, Mr Harris", and Harris gets up, and makes for the piano, with the cheeriness of a generous man who is just about to give somebody something

"Now, silence, please, everybody," says the hostess, turning round, "Mr Harris is going to sing a comic song"

"Oh, how jolly," they murmur, and they hurry in from all over the house, and crowd into the drawing-room, and sit round, waiting happily

Then Harris begins

Well, you don't expect much of a voice or musical sense in a comic song You don't mind if a man finds out, when in the middle of a note, that he is too high, and comes down suddenly You don't care about time You don't mind a man being in front of the piano, and stopping in the middle of a line to argue about it with the pianist, and then starting the verse afresh But you do expect the words You don't expect a man never to remember more than the first three lines of the first verse, and to keep on repeating these You don't expect a man to break off in the middle of a line, and laugh foolishly, and say 'it is very funny, but he can't remember the rest of it, and then try to make it up for himself, and, afterwards, suddenly recollect it, when he has got to an entirely different part of the song, and break off without a word of warning, to go back to the beginning

Harris goes on like this and never sees what an ass he is making of himself, and how he is annoying a

lot of people who never did him any harm. He honestly imagines that he has given them a good deal of pleasure, and says that he will sing another comic song after supper.

Speaking of comic songs and parties reminds me of a rather strange adventure I once had.

We were a fashionable and very intelligent party. We had on our best clothes, and we talked much, and were very happy—all except two young fellows, students, just returned from Germany, ordinary young men, who seemed restless and uncomfortable. The truth was, I expect, that we were too clever for them. They did not understand our brilliant conversation, they were out of place amongst us. They ought never to have been there at all. Everybody agreed about that, later.

We had music by the old German masters. We discussed life and ideals. Somebody recited a French poem after supper, and we said it was beautiful, and then a lady sang a love song in Spanish, and it made one or two of us weep—it was so sad.

And then those two young men got up, and asked us if we had ever heard Herr Slossenn Boschen (who had just arrived, and was then down in the supper-room) sing his great German comic song.

None of us had heard it, that we could remember.

The young men said that it was the funniest song that had ever been written, and that, if we liked, they would persuade Herr Slossenn Boschen, whom they knew well, to sing it. They said it was so funny, that, when Herr Slossenn Boschen had sung it once before the German Emperor, he (the German Emperor) had had to be carried to bed. They said nobody could sing it like Herr Slossenn Boschen, he was so serious all through it that you might fancy he

was reciting a tragedy, and that, of course, made it all the funnier

We said that we were very eager to hear it, that we wanted a good laugh, and they went downstairs, and fetched Herr Slossenn Boschen. He appeared to be quite pleased to sing it, for he came up at once, and sat down at the piano without a word

"Oh, it will amuse you. You will laugh," whispered the two young men, as they passed through the room, and took up a position behind the Professor's back

Herr Slossenn Boschen played the piano himself. The introduction did not suggest a comic song exactly. It was strangely sad. It quite made one's flesh creep, but we murmured to one another that it was the German method, and prepared to enjoy it.

I don't understand German myself. I learned it at school, but forgot every word of it two years after I had left, and have felt much better ever since. Still, I did not want the people there to guess my ignorance, so I hit upon what I thought to be rather a good idea. I kept my eye on the two young students, and followed them. When they smiled, I smiled, when they roared, I roared, and I also put in a laugh all by myself now and then, as if I had seen something funny that had escaped the others. I considered this particularly clever on my part.

I noticed, as the song progressed, that a good many other people seemed to have their eye fixed on the two young men also. These other people also smiled when the young men smiled, and roared when the young men roared, and, as the two young men smiled and roared and exploded with laughter almost continuously all through the song, it went exceedingly well.

And yet that German Professor did not seem happy. At first, when we began to laugh the expression on his face was one of great surprise, as if laughter were the very last thing he had expected to be greeted with. We thought this very funny—we said that his solemn manner was half the humour. As we continued to laugh his surprise changed to an air of anger, and he scowled fiercely round upon us all (except upon the two young men who, being behind him, he could not see). That made us laugh all the more. We told each other that this would kill us. The words alone, we said, were enough to make us burst, but added to his pretended seriousness—oh, it was too much.

He finished amid a perfect shriek of laughter. We said it was the funniest thing we had ever heard in all our lives. And we asked the Professor why he didn't translate the song into English, so that the common people could understand it and hear what a real comic song was like.

Then Herr Slossenn Boschen got up, and completely lost his temper. He swore at us in German, and he danced, and shook his fists, and called us all the English he knew. He said that he had never been so insulted in all his life.

It appeared that the song was not a comic song at all. It was about a young girl who lived in the Hartz Mountains, and who had given up her life to save her lover's soul, and he died, and met her spirit in the air, and then, in the last verse, he left her—I'm not quite sure of the details, but it was something very sad, I know. Herr Boschen said it was generally considered to be one of the most tragic songs in the German language.

It was a very difficult situation for us all. There

seemed to be nothing we could say. We looked round for the two young men who had done this thing, but they had left the house as quietly as possible immediately after the end of the song.

That was the end of the party. We never said good night even to one another. We came downstairs one at a time, walking softly. We asked the servant for our hats and coats in whispers, opened the door for ourselves, slipped out, and got round the corner quickly, avoiding each other as much as possible. I have never taken much interest in German songs since then.

We passed Walton, a rather large place for a riverside town, where Caesar once encamped, and Oatlands Park where Henry VIII once lived, and, at Weybridge, George was waiting for us. Montmorancy began to bark fiercely, I yelled and Harris roared, George waved his hat, and yelled back. People came rushing up, under the impression that somebody had fallen into the water, and seemed vexed at finding that no one had.

George had a curious oilskin-covered parcel in his hand. It was round and flat at one end, with a long straight handle sticking out of it.

"What's that?" said Harris, "a frying-pan?"

"No," said George, with a strange, wild look in his eyes, "it's a banjo¹. They are very fashionable this season. everybody has got them up the river."

"I never knew you played the banjo," cried Harris and I in one breath.

"Not exactly," replied George, "but it's very easy, I'm told, and I've got the instruction book with me."

¹ Banjo. A musical instrument, with strings, played with the fingers.

CHAPTER 8

THE FIRST NIGHT IN THE BOAT

WE made George work, now that we had got him. He did not want to work, of course. He had had a hard time in the City, so he explained. Harris, who has no pity in his nature, said

"Ah, and now you are going to have a hard time on the river for a change, change is good for everyone. Out you get."

He could not rightly object, though he did suggest that, perhaps, it would be better for him to stop in the boat, and get tea ready, while Harris and I pulled the boat upstream, because getting tea was such a worrying work, and Harris and I looked tired. The only reply we made to this, however, was to pass him the tow-line, and he took it and stepped out.

George towed us steadily on to Penton Hook. There we discussed the important question of camping. We had decided to sleep on board that night, and we had either to stop just about there, or go on past Staines. It seemed early to think about shutting up then, however, with the sun still in the heavens, and we agreed to go straight on for Runnymede, three and a half miles further, a quiet wooded part of the river, where there is good shelter.

We all wished, however, afterwards, that we had stopped at Penton Hook. Three or four miles up stream is nothing, early in the morning, but it is a weary pull at the end of a long day. You take no interest in the scenery during these last few miles. You do not chat or laugh. Every half-mile you cover

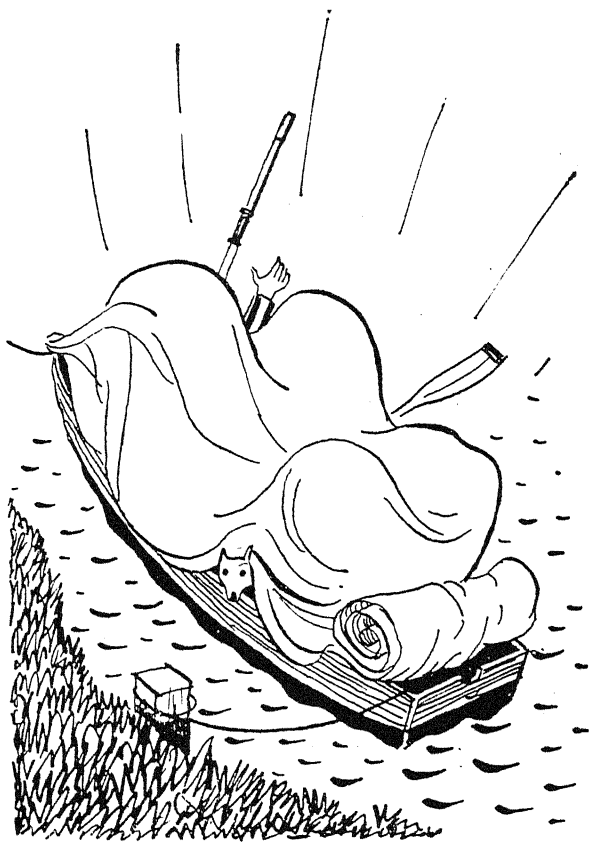
seems like two You can hardly believe you are only where you are, and you are positive that the map must be wrong

It was half-past seven when we finally got past Staines, and rowed gently up close to the left bank, looking for a spot to anchor in We had intended to go on to Magna Carta Island, a sweetly pretty part of the river, where it winds through a soft, green valley, and to camp in one of the many picturesque inlets to be found round that shore But, somehow, we did not feel that we desired the picturesque nearly so much as we had earlier in the day We did not want scenery We wanted to have our supper and go to bed However, we did pull up to the point, and dropped into a very pleasant corner under a great elm-tree, to the spreading roots of which we fastened the boat

Then we thought we were going to have supper, but George said no, that we had better get the canvas up first, before it got quite dark, and while we could see what we were doing Then, he said, all our work would be done, and we could sit down to eat with an easy mind

That canvas wanted more putting up than I think any of us had imagined It looked so simple too You took five iron arches and fitted them up over the boat, and then stretched the canvas over them, and fastened it down it would take about ten minutes, we thought, but we were soon to find that we were very wrong

We took up the arches and began to drop them into the holes placed for them You would not imagine this to be dangerous work, but, looking back now, the wonder is that any of us are alive to tell the tale They were not arches, they were evil



Putting up the canvas

spirits First they would not fit into their places at all, and we had to jump on them, and kick them, and hammer at them with the boat-hook, and, when they were in, we found that they were the wrong ones for those particular holes, and they had to come out again

But they would not come out, until two of us had struggled with them for five minutes, when they would jump up suddenly, and try to throw us into the water and drown us While we were trying to put one side of the arch into its correct position the other side would hit us over the head

We got them fixed at last, and then all that was to be done was to arrange the covering over them George unrolled it, and fastened one end over the nose of the boat Harris stood in the middle to take it from George and roll it on to me, and I stood by the stern to receive it It was a long time coming down to me George did his part all right, but it was new work to Harris, and he did it badly In some mysterious way he succeeded in getting himself completely rolled up in it He was so firmly wrapped inside it that he could not get out He made savage struggles for freedom, and, in doing so (I learned this afterwards), knocked George over, and then George began to struggle too, and got *himself* rolled up

I knew nothing about all this at the time I did not understand the business at all myself I had been told to stand where I was, and wait till the canvas came to me, and Montmorency and I stood there and waited very patiently We could see the canvas being violently pulled and thrown about, but we supposed this was part of the method, and did not interfere

We waited for some time, but matters seemed to become more and more difficult until, at last

George's head came over the side of the boat, and spoke

It said,

"Give us a hand here, can't you, you fathead, standing there like a statue, when you can see that we are both being choked to death "

I never could resist an appeal for help, so I went and unfastened them, not before it was time, either, for Harris was nearly blue in the face

It took us half an hour's hard labour, after that, before it was properly in position, and then we cleared the decks, and got our supper ready We put the kettle on to boil, up in the nose of the boat, and went down to the stern and pretended to take no notice of it, but set to work to get the other things out That is the only way to get a kettle to boil If it sees you anxiously waiting for it, it will never even sing You have to go away and begin your meal, as if you were not going to have any tea at all You must not even look round at it Then you will soon hear it hissing away, mad to be made into tea

We followed this plan now, and the result was that, by the time everything was ready, the tea was waiting Then we lit the lantern, and sat down to supper

We wanted that supper badly

For thirty-five minutes not a sound was heard except those made by our knives and forks, and the grinding of our teeth At the end of that time Harris said, "Ah," and took his left leg out from under him and put his right one there instead Five minutes afterwards, George said, "Ah" too, and threw his plate out on the bank, and three minutes later than that Montmorency gave the first sign of contentment he had shown since we had started, rolled over on

his side, and spread his legs out, and then I said, "Ah" and lay back

It is very strange how our stomach governs us We cannot work, we cannot think, unless our stomach wills so We are its slaves, and if we look after it carefully virtue and contentment will reign in our hearts

Before our supper, Harris, George and I were quarrelsome and ill tempered, after our supper, we sat and smiled brightly on one another, and we smiled brightly on the dog too We loved each other, we loved everybody Harris, in moving about, trod on George's foot, and, instead of merely saying, in his most unpleasant voice, that a fellow could hardly help treading on some part of George's foot if he had to move about at all within ten yards of where George was sitting, as he would have done before supper, he said "Oh, I'm so sorry, old chap, I hope I haven't hurt you"

And George said "Not at all, it was entirely my fault", and Harris said no, it was his It was quite pretty to hear them

We lit our pipes, and sat, looking out on the quiet night, and talked

We went to bed at ten that night, and I thought I should sleep well, being tired, but I didn't I did get to sleep for a few hours, and then some part of the boat which seemed to have grown up during the night—for it certainly was not there when we started, and it had disappeared by the morning—kept pushing into my back I slept through it for a while, dreaming that I had swallowed a sovereign and that they were cutting a hole in my back to get it out I thought it very unkind of them, and I told them I would owe them the money, and that they

should have it at the end of the month, but they would not hear of it and went on cutting so cruelly that I woke up

The boat seemed airless, and my head ached, so I thought I would step out into the cool night air. I slipped on what clothes I could find—some of my own, and some of Harris's and George's—and crept out under the canvas on to the bank.

It was a glorious night. The moon had sunk and left the quiet earth alone with the stars. It was a night full of comfort and of strength, in whose presence my small sorrows crept away, ashamed, a night which laid her gentle hand upon my hot and aching brow, so that, soon, I was able to go peacefully back to the boat and to sleep.

CHAPTER 9

THE NEXT MORNING

I WOKE at six the next morning, and found George awake too. We both turned over and tried to sleep again, but could not. Had there been any special reason why we should *not* have gone to sleep again, we should almost certainly have fallen asleep while we were looking at our watches, and have slept till ten. As there was no necessity at all for our getting up for at least another two hours, and getting up at that time was utter foolishness, it was only in agreement with the contradictory nature of things in general that we could not sleep another wink.

George said that the same kind of thing, only worse, had happened to him some eighteen months ago, when he was lodging by himself in the house of a certain Mrs Gippings. He said his watch went wrong one evening, and stopped at a quarter past eight. He did not know this at the time because, for some reason or other, he forgot to wind it up when he went to bed, and hung it up over his pillow without ever looking at the thing.

It was in the winter when this happened, very near the shortest day, and a week of fog had made matters worse, so the fact that it was still very dark when George woke in the morning was no guide to him as to the time. He put up his hand, and pulled down his watch. It was a quarter past eight.

"Angels defend us," exclaimed George, "and I have got to be in the City by nine. Why didn't some body call me? Oh, this is a shame." He threw the watch down, sprang out of bed, had a cold bath, shaved himself in cold water because there was not time to wait for the hot, dressed himself and then rushed and had another look at the watch.

Whether the shaking it had received in being thrown down on the bed had started it, or how it was, George could not say, but it was certain that from a quarter past eight it had begun to go, and now pointed to twenty minutes to nine.

George seized it and rushed downstairs. In the sitting-room all was dark and silent: there was no fire, no breakfast. George said it was a wicked shame of Mrs G, and he made up his mind to tell her what he thought of her when he came home in the evening. Then he dashed on his coat and hat, and, seizing his umbrella, made for the front door. The door was not even unbolted. George swore at Mrs

G, calling her a lazy old woman, unlocked and unbolted the door and ran out

He ran hard for a quarter of a mile, and at the end of that distance he began to think it strange that there were so few people about and that there were no shops open. It was certainly a very dark and foggy morning, but still it seemed extraordinary to stop all business for that reason. *He* had to go to business why should other people stop in bed just because it was dark and foggy?

At length he reached Holborn. Not a shutter was down, not a bus was to be seen. There were three men in sight, one of whom was a policeman, a market-cart full of cabbages, and a broken-down-looking cab. George pulled out his watch and looked at it, it was five minutes to nine. He stood still and counted his pulse. He stooped down and felt his legs. Then, with his watch still in his hand, he went up to the policeman, and asked him if he knew what time it was.

"What's the time?" repeated the man, eyeing George with evident suspicion, "why, if you listen you will hear it strike."

George listened, and a neighbouring clock struck three.

"But it's only struck three," said George in an injured tone.

"Well, and how many did you want it to strike?" said the policeman.

"Why, nine," said George, showing his watch.

"Do you know where you live?" said the constable severely.

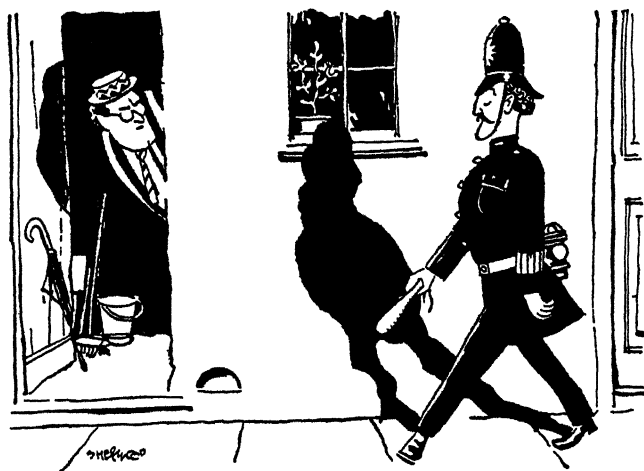
George did, and gave the address.

"Oh, that's where it is, is it?" replied the man, "well, you take my advice and go there quietly, and

take that watch of yours with you, and don't let us have any more of it "

So George went home again, thinking deeply as he went along, and let himself into the house

At first, when he got in, he determined to undress and go to bed again, but when he thought of the re-dressing and re-washing and having another bath



George hides from the Police

he determined he would not, but would go to sleep in an armchair instead

But he could not go to sleep, he never felt more wakeful in his life, so he lit the lamp and got out the chess-board, and played himself a game of chess. But even that did not enliven him, it seemed too slow, so he gave up chess and tried to read. He did not seem able to take any interest in reading either, so he put on his coat again and went out for a walk

It was horribly lonely and gloomy, and all the policemen he met looked at him with suspicion, and turned their lanterns on him and followed him about. This had such an effect on him at last that he began to feel as if he really had committed a crime, and he began to creep stealthily along the side-streets and to hide in dark doorways when he heard the approach of a policeman's feet.

Of course this conduct only made the police more distrustful of him than ever, and they would come and pull him out and ask him what he was doing there, and when he answered "Nothing," and said that he had only come out for a walk (it was then four o'clock in the morning), they looked as though they did not believe him, and two plain-clothes constables went home with him to see if he really did live where he said he did. They saw him go in with his key, and then they took up a position opposite and watched the house.

He thought he would light a fire when he got inside, and make himself some breakfast, just to pass the time, but he did not seem able to handle any thing from a bucket full of coal to a teaspoon without dropping it or falling over it, and making such a noise that he was terrified that it would wake Mrs G, and that she would think it was thieves and open the window and shout "Police," and then those two detectives would rush in and handcuff him, and march him off to the court.

He was in a dreadfully nervous state by this time, and he imagined the trial and his attempts to explain the circumstances to the jury, and nobody believing him, and his being sentenced to twenty years in prison, and his mother dying of a broken heart. So he stopped trying to get breakfast, and wrapped him-

self up in his overcoat, and sat in the armchair till Mrs G came down at half past seven

He said he had never got up too early in the morning since then, it had been such a warning to him

We had been sitting wrapped up in our rugs while George had been telling me this story, and, when he had finished it, I began to wake Harris up with an oar. It took a long time, and we had to use a pole before he finally sat up very suddenly, sending Montmorency, who had been sleeping on the middle of his chest, right across the boat

Then we pulled up the canvas, and all four of us put our heads over the side, looked down at the water, and shivered. The night before our idea had been that we should get up early in the morning, throw off our rugs and blankets, and, pulling aside the canvas, plunge into the water with a joyous shout and enjoy a long delightful swim. Somehow, now the morning had come, the idea seemed less tempting. The water looked damp and chilly, the wind felt cold

"Well, who's going to be first in?" said Harris at last

There was no rush for this honour. George showed what he intended to do by withdrawing into the boat and pulling on his socks. Montmorency howled miserably, as if just thinking of it had given him a pain, and Harris said it would be difficult to get back into the boat again, and went back and looked for his trousers

I did not altogether like to give in, although I did not care to think about the plunge. I meant to go down to the edge and throw water over myself, so I took a towel, crept out on to the bank and wormed

my way along on the branch of a tree that dipped down into the water

It was bitterly cold The wind cut like a knife I thought I would not throw the water over myself after all I would go back into the boat and dress, and I turned to do so, and, as I turned, the silly branch gave way, and I and the towel went in together with a tremendous splash, and I was out in mid-stream with a great deal of Thames water inside me before I know what had happened

"By Jove, old J 's gone in," I heard Harris say, as I came blowing to the surface "I didn't think he'd have the courage to do it Did you?"

"Is it all right?" George shouted

"Lovely," I answered "You are foolish not to come in I wouldn't have missed this for worlds Why don't you try it? It only wants a little determination"

But I could not persuade them

Rather an amusing thing happened while dressing that morning I was very cold when I got back into the boat, and, in my hurry to get my shirt on, I let it slip by accident into the water It made me terribly wild, especially as George burst out laughing I could not see anything to laugh at, and I told George so, and he only laughed the more I never saw a man laugh so much I quite lost my temper with him at last, and I pointed out to him what a brainless, insane idiot he was, but he only roared the louder And then, just as I was recovering the shirt, I noticed that it was not my shirt at all, but George's which I had mistaken for mine, whereupon the humour of the incident struck me for the first time, and I began to laugh And the more I looked from George's wet shirt to George, roaring with laughter, the more I

was amused, and I laughed so much that I had to let the shirt fall back into the water again.

"Aren't you—you—going to get it out?" said George between his shrieks.

I could not answer him at all for a while as I was laughing so much, but at last I managed to say:

"It isn't my shirt—it's *yours*."

I never saw a man's face change from lively to severe so suddenly in all my life before.

"What," he yelled, springing up. "You silly donkey. Why can't you be more careful what you're doing? Why on earth don't you go and dress on the bank? You're not fit to be in a boat."

I tried to make him see the fun of the thing, but he could not. George is very dense at seeing a joke sometimes.

Harris proposed that we should have scrambled eggs for breakfast. He said that he would cook them. It seemed, from his account, that he was very good at cooking scrambled eggs. He often did them at picnics and when out sailing. He was quite famous for them. People who had once tasted his scrambled eggs, so we gathered from his conversation, never cared for any other food afterwards, but wasted away and died when they could not get them.

It made our mouths water to hear him talk about them, and we handed him the stove and the frying-pan and all the eggs that had not broken and gone over everything in the basket of food, and begged him to begin.

He had some trouble in breaking the eggs—or rather not so much trouble in breaking them as in getting them into the frying-pan when broken, and keeping them off his trousers or from running up his sleeve; but he fixed some half-a-dozen into the pan

at last, and then sat down by the side of the stove and stirred them with a fork

It seemed troublesome work, so far as George and I could judge. Whenever he went near the pan he burned himself, and then he would drop everything and dance round the stove, shaking his fingers and cursing. Indeed, every time George and I looked round at him he was sure to be doing this. We thought at first that it was a necessary part of the cooking arrangements.

We did not know what scrambled eggs were, and we fancied that it must be some Red Indian sort of dish that required dances and muttered words for its proper cooking. Montmorency went and put his nose over it once, and the fat jumped up and burnt him, and then *he* began dancing and cursing. Altogether it was one of the most interesting and exciting operations I have ever witnessed. George and I were both quite sorry when it was finished.

The result was not altogether the success that Harris had expected. There seemed so little to show for all his trouble. Six eggs had gone into the frying-pan, and all that came out was a teaspoonful of burnt and unappetizing-looking mixture.

Harris said that it was the fault of the frying-pan, and thought that it would have gone better if we had had a fish-kettle and a gas-stove, and we decided not to attempt the dish again until we had those aids to housekeeping with us.

The sun had become more powerful by the time we had finished breakfast, and the wind had fallen, and it was as beautiful a morning as one could desire. Little was in sight to remind us of the nineteenth century, and, as we looked out upon the river in the morning sunlight, we could almost fancy that the

centuries between us and that ever-to-be-famous June morning of 1215 had rolled back and that we, English yeomen's¹ sons in homespun cloth, were waiting there to witness the writing of that wonderful page of history, when King John was obliged to sign his name to Magna Carta, the great corner-stone in England's temple of liberty. I pictured to myself the morning scene on that great day. From hour to hour, along the road that winds on the river bank from Staines, there marched fresh groups and bands of armed men, until, as far as eye could reach, the way seemed thick with glittering steel and trotting horses. Shouting horsemen were galloping from group to group, and little flags were waving lazily in the warm breeze, and every now and then there was a deeper stir as the ranks made way on either side, and some great Baron on his war-horse, with his guard of squires² around him, passed along to take up his position at the head of his men.

Up the hill, just opposite, were gathered the wondering countrymen and curious townsfolk, and each one had a different story to tell of the great event that they had come to see, and some said that much good to all the people would come from that day's work, but the old men shook their heads, for they had heard such tales before.

All the river down to Staines was dotted with small boats, crowding up as near as they dared come to the great covered barges³ which were lying in readiness to bear King John to where the Charter waited for his signing.

At noon, far down the road, a little cloud of dust

¹ Yeomen. Countrymen—usually farmers.

² Squires. The attendants of a knight.

³ Barge. A large boat, used at that time by noble families.

arose, drawing nearer and growing larger, and the noise of many hoofs grew louder, and in and out between the scattered groups of drawn-up men, there pushed on its way a brilliant procession of gaily-dressed lords and knights. And front and rear, and either side, there rode yeomen of the Barons, and in the midst King John.

He rode to where the barges lay in readiness, and the great Barons stepped from their ranks to meet him. He greeted them with a smile and a laugh and pleasant honeyed words, as though it were some feast in his honour to which he had been invited, but, as he dismounted, he threw one hurried glance from his own French soldiers, drawn up in the rear, to the stern ranks of the Barons' men that surrounded him.

Was it too late? One fierce blow at the unsuspect-
ing horseman ^{at} his side, one cry to his French ^{troops}, one desperate attack upon the unready lines before him, and those same Barons might have been sorry that they had dared to oppose his plans, the cup of liberty might have been dashed from England's lips, and the taste of freedom held back for a hundred years.

But the heart of King John sank before the pitiless faces of the English fighting men, and the arm of King John dropped back on his rein. He dismounted and took his seat in the foremost barge. The Barons followed in, with their hands upon the sword-hilt, and the word was given to go.

Slowly the heavy barges left the shore of Runnymede. Slowly against the swift current they moved on their way till they came to the banks of the little island that from then would bear the name of Magna Carta Island. King John stepped ashore, and the

onlookers waited in breathless silence till a great shout rose in the air to announce that the great foundation-stone of freedom had been firmly laid

CHAPTER 10

ADVENTURES WITH A TIN AND A BOAT

I WAS sitting on the bank, with this scene in my mind, when George remarked that when I was quite rested, perhaps I would not mind helping to wash up, and, thus recalled from the days of the glorious past to the ordinary present, I slid down into the boat and cleaned out the frying-pan with a stick and a piece of grass, polishing it finally with George's wet shirt

We went over to Magna Carta Island, and had a look at the stone which stands in the cottage there and on which the Great Charter is said to have been signed, and then we returned to the boat and made ready to continue our journey

From Picnic Point to Old Windsor Lock is a delightful bit of the river. A shady road, dotted here and there with pleasant little cottages, runs by the bank. Old Windsor is a famous place in its way. Edward the Confessor¹ had a palace here, and here the great Earl Godwin was proved guilty by the justice of that age of having brought about the death of the King's brother. Earl Godwin broke a piece of bread and held it in his hand

¹ Edward the Confessor King of England 1042-66

"If I am guilty," said the Earl, "may this bread choke me when I eat it"

Then he put the bread into his mouth and swallowed it, and it choked him, and he died

After you pass Old Windsor, the river is somewhat uninteresting for a time George and I pulled the boat along as far as Monkey Island, where we stopped and had lunch We decided to eat the cold beef for lunch, and then we found that we had forgotten to bring any mustard I don't think I ever felt I wanted mustard as much as I did then I don't care for mustard usually, and it is very seldom that I take it at all, but I would have given worlds for it then Harris said that he would have given worlds for it too It would have been a good thing for anybody who had come to that spot with some mustard, he would have been given enough worlds for the rest of his life

It made us gloomy, not having any mustard We ate our beef in silence Life seemed empty and uninteresting We thought of the happy days of childhood, and sighed We became more cheerful, however, when George drew out a tin of pears from the bottom of the basket We all liked pears We looked at the picture on the tin, we thought of the juice We smiled at one another, and Harris got a spoon ready

Then we looked for the tin-opener We pulled out everything in the basket We pulled out everything in the bags We pulled up the boards at the bottom of the boat We took out everything on to the bank, and shook it There was no tin-opener to be found

Then Harris tried to open the tin with a pocket-knife, and broke the knife and cut himself badly,



We try to open a tin

George tried a pair of scissors, and the scissors flew up and nearly blinded him. While they were dressing their wounds, I tried to make a hole in the thing with the pointed end of the boat-hook, and the boat-hook slipped and threw me out between the boat and the bank into two feet of muddy water, and the tin rolled over, uninjured, and broke a teacup.

Then we all became mad. We took that tin out on to the bank, and Harris went up into a field and got a big sharp stone, and I went back to the boat and brought out the mast, and George held the tin and Harris held the sharp end of his stone against the top of it, and I raised the mast high in the air, gathered all my strength and brought it down.

It was George's straw hat that saved his life that day. He keeps that hat now (what is left of it), and, on a winter's evening, George brings it out and shows it round to his friends, and the tale is told again, with fresh exaggerations every time.

Harris escaped with only a flesh wound.

After that I took the tin myself, and hammered at it with the mast till I was weary and sick at heart, whereupon Harris took it in hand.

We beat it flat, we beat it back square, we beat it into every form and shape known to geometry—but we could not knock a hole in it. Then George took it, and knocked it into a shape so strange and horrible that he became frightened and threw away the mast. Then we all three sat around it on the grass and looked at it.

There was one great hollow across the top of it that had the appearance of a mocking smile, and it made us madder than ever, so Harris rushed at it and seizing it, threw it far out into the middle of the river, and as it sank we cursed it. Then we got into

the boat and rowed away from the spot, and never paused till we reached Maidenhead

We went through Maidenhead quickly, but then proceeded more leisurely through the lovely scenery beyond. Soon after tea, we found that a stiff breeze had risen—in our favour. This was surprising, for usually, on the river, the wind is always against you whichever way you go. It is against you in the morning when you start, and you pull a long distance, thinking how easy it will be to come back with the sail. Then, after tea, the wind changes, and you have to pull against it all the way home. When you forget to take the sail at all, the wind is always in your favour both ways.

This evening, however, there had evidently been a mistake, and the wind was round at our backs instead of in our faces. We kept very quiet about it, and put up the sail quickly, and the sail filled out and pulled at the mast, and the boat flew.

I steered

There is no more wonderful experience I know of than sailing. The wings of the rushing wind seem to be bearing you onward, you know not where. You become a part of Nature. The voices of the air are singing to you. The earth seems far away and little, the clouds so close above your head are brothers, and you stretch out your arms to them.

We had the river to ourselves, except that, far in the distance, we could see a fishing-boat, anchored in mid-stream, in which three fishermen sat, and we sailed quickly and smoothly over the water, passing the wooded banks, and no one spoke.

I was steering

As we drew nearer, we could see that the three men fishing seemed old and solemn-looking men.

They sat in the boat and watched their lines intently. The red sunset threw a magic light upon the water, and touched with fire the towering woods, and made a golden glory of the clouds. It was an hour of deep beauty.

We seemed like knights of some old story, sailing across some mysterious lake into the unknown twilight, to the great land of the sunset.

We did not go into the kingdom of twilight, we went straight into the boat where those three old men were fishing. We did not know what had happened at first, because the sail shut out the view, but from the angry cries that rose upon the evening air, we gathered that we had come into the neighbourhood of human beings, and that they were vexed and discontented.

Harris let the sail down, and then we saw what had happened. We had knocked those three old gentlemen into a heap at the bottom of the boat, and they were now slowly and painfully struggling to their feet and picking fish off themselves, and as they did so, they cursed us.

Harris told them that they ought to be grateful for a little excitement, and he also said that it made him sad to hear men of their age say such awful things. But it did not do any good.

George said that he would steer, after that. He said a mind like mine was not fitted for steering boats—it was better to let a more ordinary human being look after that boat, before we all got drowned, and he took the lines, and brought us up to Marlow, where we left the boat, and went to stay the night at an inn.

CHIEFLY ABOUT MONTMORENCY

MARLOW is one of the pleasantest river centres I know of. It is a busy, lively little town, not very picturesque on the whole, it is true, but there are many old-fashioned corners to be found in it, nevertheless. There is lovely country round about it, too, if, after boating, you are fond of a walk, while the river itself is very pretty here.

A little higher up the river is what is left of Medmenham Abbey, where, in the thirteenth century, the Cistercian monks¹ lived. They wore no clothes but rough gowns, and ate no flesh, fish or eggs. They lay upon straw, and they rose at midnight for prayers. They spent the day in labour, reading and prayer, and over all their lives there fell a silence, as of death, for no one spoke.

We got up quite early on the Monday morning at Marlow, and went for a bathe before breakfast, and, coming back, Montmorency made an awful ass of himself. The only subject on which Montmorency and I really disagree is cats. I like cats, Montmorency does not.

When I meet a cat, I speak gently to it and stoop down to stroke the side of its head, and the cat sticks its tail into the air, arches its back, and rubs itself against my trousers, lovingly and peacefully. When Montmorency meets a cat, the whole street quickly knows about it, and the noise and disturbance are

¹ Cistercian monks. A body of monks who took their name from Cisteaux in France, where their first abbey was established in 1098.

overpowering I do not blame the dog, because I suppose that it is his nature Dogs of his kind are born with about four times as much wickedness in them as other dogs are, and it will take years of patient effort on the part of mankind to improve their character

I remember being in the entrance of a large London shop one day, and all round about me were dogs, waiting for the return of their owners, who were shopping inside There were one or two sheep-dogs, a bulldog, a Saint Bernard, a few Newfoundlands, a French poodle, a few animals about the size of rats, and two Yorkshire terriers

There they sat, patient, good and thoughtful A solemn peacefulness reigned over everything

Then a sweet young lady entered, leading a gentle-looking fox-terrier (Montmorency's breed), and she left him, chained up there, between the bulldog and the French poodle He sat and looked about him for a minute Then he looked up towards the ceiling, and seemed, judging from his expression, to be thinking of his mother Then he yawned Then he looked round at the other dogs, all silent and noble-looking

He looked at the bulldog, sleeping dreamlessly on his right He looked at the poodle, sitting straight and proud, on his left Then, without a word of warning, and for no possible reason, he bit the poodle's near front leg, and a yelp of pain rang out

So pleased was the fox-terrier with what he had done that he determined to continue He sprang over the poodle and attacked a sheep-dog which woke up and immediately commenced a fierce and noisy battle with the poodle Then Foxey came back to his place, and caught the bulldog by the ear and tried to throw him away, and the bulldog attacked every-

thing he could reach, including the hall-porter, which gave the terrier the chance to enjoy an uninterrupted fight of his own with an equally willing Yorkshire terrier

Of course, by this time, all the other dogs in the place were fighting as if their lives depended upon the result. The big dogs fought against each other, and the little dogs fought among themselves, and filled up their spare time by biting the legs of the big dogs.

The whole entrance was filled with a storm of noise. A crowd collected in the street outside, and wanted to know who was being murdered. Men came with poles and ropes, and tried to separate the dogs, and the police were sent for.

In the middle of all this that sweet young lady returned, and picked up that sweet little dog of hers (he had injured the Yorkshire terrier severely, and was now wearing an expression of complete innocence), and kissed him, and asked him if he was killed, and what those great brutes of dogs had been doing to him, and he gazed up into her face with a look that seemed to say "Oh, I'm so glad you've come to take me away from this terrible scene."

Such is the nature of fox-terriers, and, therefore, I do not reproach Montmorency for being quarrelsome with cats, but he wished he had not been so that morning.

We were, as I have said, returning from a bathe, and halfway up the High Street a cat darted out from one of the houses in front of us, and began to trot across the road. Montmorency gave a cry of joy—the cry of a stern warrior who sees his enemy given over to his hands—and flew after his prey.

His victim was a large black cat I never saw a larger cat, nor a worse-looking cat It had lost half its tail, one of its ears and a fairly large proportion of its nose It was a long, muscular-looking animal It had a calm, contented air about it

Montmorency dashed after that poor cat at the rate of twenty miles an hour, but the cat did not hurry—it did not seem to have understood that its life was in danger It trotted quietly on until its would-be murderer was within a yard of it, and then it turned round and sat down in the middle of the road, and looked at Montmorency with a gentle, inquiring expression, that said

“Yes You want me?”

Montmorency is not without courage, but there was something about the look of that cat that might have turned cold the heart of the bravest dog He stopped suddenly, and looked back at the cat

Neither spoke, but the conversation that one could imagine was clearly as follows

The Cat “Can I do anything for you?”

Montmorency “No—no, thanks”

The Cat “Don’t be afraid of speaking, if you really want anything, you know”

Montmorency (backing down the High Street) “Oh, no—not at all—certainly—don’t you trouble I—I am afraid I’ve made a mistake I thought I knew you Sorry I disturbed you”

The Cat “Not at all—quite a pleasure Sure you don’t want anything, now?”

Montmorency (still backing) “Not at all, thanks—not at all—very kind of you Good morning”

The Cat “Good morning”

Then the cat rose, and continued his trot, and Montmorency, putting his tail between his legs,

came back to us, and took up an unimportant position in the rear

To this day, if you say the word "Cats" to Montmorency, he will visibly shrink and look up piteously at you, as if to say

"Please don't"

We did our marketing after breakfast, and bought enough provisions for three days. George said that we ought to take vegetables—that it was unhealthy not to eat vegetables. He said they were easy enough to cook, and that he would look after that, so we got ten pounds of potatoes, a large quantity of peas, and a few cabbages. We got a beefsteak pie and a couple of fruit pies from the hotel, as well as a leg of mutton, and fruit, and cakes, and bread and butter, and jam, and bacon and eggs, and other things we bought in the town itself.

Our departure from Marlow was a very successful one. We had insisted at all the shops which we had been to that the things should be sent with us then and there. We waited while the basket was packed, and took the boy with us. We went to a good many shops, following this method at each one, and the result was that, by the time we had finished, we had a splendid collection of boys with baskets following us around, and our final march down the middle of the High Street to the river must have been as impressive a spectacle as Marlow had seen for a very long time.

The order of the procession was as follows

Montmorency, carrying a stick

Two evil-looking dogs, friends of Montmorency

George, carrying coats and a rug, and smoking a short pipe

Harris, trying to walk easily while carrying an

overfilled suitcase in one hand and a bottle of lime-juice in the other

Greengrocer's boy and baker's boy, with baskets

Boy from the hotel, carrying a large hamper

Grocer's boy, with basket

Long haired dog

An odd man, carrying a bag

Close friend of the odd man, with his hands in his pockets, smoking a short clay pipe

Fruiterer's boy, with basket

Myself, carrying three hats and a pair of boots, and trying to look as if I didn't know it

Six small boys, and four stray dogs

When we got down to the landing stage, the boat-man said

"Let me see, sir, was yours a steam launch of a house-boat?"

When we informed him that it was a double-rowing boat, with sail, he seemed surprised

We had a good deal of trouble with steam launches that morning. They were going up the river in large numbers, some by themselves, some pulling house-boats along. I hate steam launches. I suppose every rowing man does. There is a noisy self-importance about a steam launch that arouses every evil feeling in my nature, and I wish we were back in the past, when you could go about and tell people what you thought of them with an axe and a bow and arrows. Their lordly whistle for you to get out of the way would, I am sure, be enough to let you escape with a verdict of "justifiable murder" from any jury of river men.

We made them keep on whistling for us to get out of their way. I think I can honestly say that our one small boat, during that week, caused more annoy-

ance and delay to the steam launches that we saw than all the other boats on the river put together

"Steam launch coming," one of us cries out, on sighting the enemy in the distance, and, in an instant, everything is ready to receive her. I take the lines, Harris and George sit down beside me, all of us with our backs to the launch, and the boat drifts out quietly into mid stream

On comes the launch, whistling, and on we go, drifting. At about a hundred yards off, she begins to whistle madly, and the people come and lean over the side, and roar at us, but we never hear them! Harris is telling us a tale about his mother, and George and I wouldn't miss a word of it for worlds.

Then the launch gives a final shriek of a whistle that nearly bursts the boiler, and she reverses the engines and blows off steam, swings round and runs ashore, everybody on board of it rushes to the bow and yells at us, the people on the bank stand and shout to us, and all the other passing boats stop and join in, till the whole river for miles up and down is in a state of wild disorder. Then Harris breaks off in the most interesting part of his story, and looks up with mild surprise, and says to George

"Good heavens, here's a steam launch."

George answers

"Well, do you know, I thought I heard something."

At this, we get nervous and confused, and do not know how to get the boat out of the way, and the people in the launch crowd round and instruct us.

"Pull your right—you, you idiot, back with your left. No, not you—the other one—leave the lines alone, can't you—now, both together. NOT *that* way. Oh, you——!"

Then they lower a boat and come to our assistance, and, after a quarter of an hour's effort, they get us out of their way, so that they can go on, and we thank them so much, and ask them to give us a pull. But they never do.

CHAPTER 12

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF HARRIS AND THE MAKING OF AN IRISH STEW

WE lunched that day at Wargrave, and it was during this lunch that George and I received a severe shock. Harris received a shock, too, but I do not think that Harris's shock was nearly so bad as the shock that George and I had.

We were sitting in a meadow, about ten yards from the water's edge, and we had just settled down comfortably to feed. Harris had the beefsteak pie between his knees, and was carving it, and George and I were waiting with our plates ready.

"Have you got a spoon there?" said Harris, "I want a spoon to serve the gravy with."

The basket was close behind us, and George and I both turned round to get one out. We were not five seconds getting it. When we looked round again, Harris and the pie had completely vanished!

It was a wide, open field. There was not a tree or a hedge for hundreds of yards. He could not have fallen into the river, because we were on the water side of him, and he would have had to climb over us to do it.

George and I gazed everywhere. Then we gazed at each other.

"Has he been snatched up to heaven?" I asked.

"They would not have taken the pie too," said George.

There seemed some truth in this, and we tried to think of another explanation.

"I suppose," said George, "that there has been an earthquake." And then he added, with a touch of sadness in his voice, "I wish he hadn't been carving that pie."

With a sigh, we turned our eyes once more towards the spot where Harris and the pie had last been seen on earth, and there, as our blood froze in our veins and our hair stood up on end, we saw Harris's head—and nothing but his head—standing upright among the tall grass, the face very red, and bearing upon it an expression of great anger.

George was the first to recover.

"Speak," he cried, "and tell us whether you are alive or dead—and where is the rest of you?"

"Oh, don't be a stupid ass," said Harris's head. "I believe you did it on purpose."

"Did what?" exclaimed George and I.

"Why, put me to sit here—a very silly trick. Here, catch hold of the pie."

Out of the middle of the earth, as it seemed to us, rose the pie—very much mixed up and damaged, and, after it, scrambled Harris, dirty and wet.

He had been sitting, without knowing it, on the edge of a small gully¹, the long grass hiding it from view, and in leaning back he had fallen over together with the pie.

He said that he had never felt so surprised in all

¹ Gully. A little valley worn by running water.

his life as when he first felt himself falling without being able to imagine what had happened. He thought at first that the end of the world had come.

We caught a breeze after lunch which took us gently up past Wargrave and Shiplake. Softened by the sleepy sunlight of a summer's afternoon, Wargrave, lying where the river bends, makes a sweet old picture as you pass it, and one that remains long in the memory.

From Shiplake up to Sonning, the river winds in and out through many islands, and is very calm, hushed and lonely. It is a part of the river in which to dream of bygone days, of vanished forms and faces, and things that might have been but are not.

We got out of the boat at Sonning, and went for a walk round the village. It is the most fairy-like little place on the whole river. It is more like a stage village than one built of bricks. Every house is covered with roses, and now, in early June, they were blossoming in clouds of splendour.

We wandered about Sonning for an hour or more, and then, it being too late to go on past Reading, we decided to go back to one of the Shiplake islands, and stay there for the night. It was still early when we got settled, and George said that, as we had plenty of time, it would be a splendid opportunity to make ourselves a really good supper. He said he would show us what could be done up the river in the way of cooking, and proposed that, with the vegetables and the remains of the cold beef and general odds and ends, we should make an Irish stew.

It seemed an attractive idea. George gathered wood and made a fire, and Harris and I started to peel the potatoes. I should never have thought that peeling potatoes was such a difficult task. We began

cheerfully, but our lightheartedness was gone by the time the first potato was finished. The more we peeled, the more peel there seemed to be left on, by the time we had got the peel off, there was very little potato left. We worked steadily for twenty-five minutes, and did four potatoes. Then we refused to continue. We said we should need the rest of the evening for removing the peel from ourselves.

George said that it was silly to have only four potatoes in an Irish stew, so we washed half a dozen more, and put them in without peeling. We also put in a cabbage and some peas. George stirred it all up, and then he said that there seemed to be plenty of room left, so we searched in both the hampers, picked out all the odds and ends, and added them to the stew. Then George found half a tin of fish, and he emptied that into the pot ~~and~~.

He said that was the advantage of Irish stew, you got rid of such a lot of things. I pulled out a couple of eggs that were cracked, and we put those in.

I forgot what else we put in, but I know that nothing was wasted, and I remember that, towards the end, Montmorency, who had shown great interest in what we were doing, walked away with a thoughtful air, reappearing, a few minutes afterwards, with a dead water-rat in his mouth, which he evidently wished to present as his share towards the dinner.

We had a discussion as to whether the rat should go in or not. Harris said that he thought it would be all right, mixed up with the other things, and that every little helped, but George said no. He said he had never heard of water-rats in Irish stew, and he would rather be on the safe side and leave it out.

Harris said

"If you never try a new thing, how can you tell what it is like? It is men such as you who hinder the world's progress"

That Irish stew was a great success. I don't think that I ever enjoyed a meal more. There was something so fresh and tasty about it. One gets so tired of the usual dishes, here was one with a new flavour, with a taste like nothing on earth.

We finished with tea and fruit pie. Montmorency had a fight with the kettle during tea-time, and was badly beaten.

Throughout the trip, he had shown great curiosity concerning the kettle. He used to sit and watch it as it boiled, with a puzzled expression, and tried to rouse it every now and then by growling at it. When it began to hiss and steam, he wanted to fight it, but, at that moment, someone always rushed up and carried away his victim before he could begin.

To-day, he determined he would be first. At the first sound the kettle made, he rose, growling, and advanced towards it in a threatening attitude. It was only a little kettle, but it was full of courage, and it spat at him.

"Ah, would you!" growled Montmorency, showing his teeth, "I'll teach you to be rude to a hard-working, respectable dog, you miserable, long-nosed dirty looking villain. Come on!"

So saying, he rushed at the poor little kettle, and seized it by the "nose."

Then, across the evening stillness, there rang out a fearful yell, and Montmorency left the boat, and raced three times round the island, stopping every now and then to bury his nose in some cool mud.

From that day, Montmorency regarded the kettle with a mixture of dread, hate and suspicion. When-

ever he saw it, he would growl and back at a rapid rate, with his tail between his legs, and the moment it was put upon the stove he would climb out of the boat and sit on the bank until tea was finished

George got out his banjo after supper, and wanted to play it, but Harris objected, he said that he had got a headache, and did not feel strong enough to stand it. George thought the music might do him good, he said that music often calmed the nerves and took away a headache, and he played two or three notes to show Harris what it was like

Harris said that he preferred to have the headache

George has never learned to play the banjo to this day. He has had too much general discouragement to meet. He tried on two or three evenings, while we were up the river, to get a little practice, but it was never a success. Harris became violently angry, and Montmorency would sit and howl continuously all through the performance

"What does he want to howl like that for when I'm playing?" George would exclaim, while taking aim at the dog with a boot

"What do you want to play like that for when he is howling?" Harris would reply, seizing the boot. "You leave him alone. He can't help howling. He has a musical ear, and your playing makes him howl."

So George decided to stop his study of the banjo until he reached home, but he did not get much opportunity even there. Mrs. P. used to come up stairs and say that she was very sorry—for herself, she liked to hear him—but the lady upstairs was in a very poor state of health, and the doctor was afraid that George's playing might injure her.

Then George tried taking his banjo out with

him late at night, and practising round the square, but the inhabitants complained to the police about it, a watch was set for him one night, and he was captured. The evidence against him was very clear, and he was bound over¹ to keep the peace for six months.

He seemed to lose heart in the business after that. He did make one or two feeble efforts to take up the work again when the six months had passed, but there was always the same coldness, the same want of sympathy on the part of the world to fight against, and, after a time, he despaired altogether, and advertised the instrument for sale at a great sacrifice, and began to learn card tricks instead.

It must be disheartening work learning to play a musical instrument. You would think that people would do all they could to assist a man to master the art, but they do no such thing.

I knew a young man once who was learning to play the bagpipes,² and you would be surprised at the opposition he had to fight against. Not even from the members of his own family did he receive encouragement. His father was completely against him from the first, and spoke very freely about it.

My friend used to get up early in the morning to practise, but he had to give that up because his sister said that it seemed such a terrible thing to start the day like that.

So he sat up late at night instead, and played after the family had gone to bed, but that did not do, as it got the house such a bad name. People, going home late, would stop outside to listen, and then spread

¹ Bound over. Made to swear an oath before the judge.

² Bagpipes. A musical wind-instrument, consisting of a leather bag with pipes fixed to it.

the story all over the town, the next morning, that a fearful murder had been committed at Mr Jefferson's the night before, and they would describe how they had heard the victim's shrieks and the brutal oaths and curses of the murderer, followed by the prayer for mercy, and the last dying groan of the corpse

Next, they let him practise in the back kitchen with all the doors shut, but his more successful passages could generally be heard in the sitting-room, and would affect his mother almost to tears

Then they built a little shed for him at the bottom of the garden, about a quarter of a mile from the house, and made him take the instrument down there when he wanted to play it, and sometimes a visitor would come to the house who knew nothing about the matter, and they would forget to tell him about it, and he would go out for a stroll round the garden and suddenly get within earshot of those bagpipes without being prepared for it, or knowing what it was. If he were a man of strong mind, he was able to recover from the shock, but if he were an ordinary person it usually sent him mad

CHAPTER 13

HARRIS IS LEFT ALONE IN THE BOAT

HARRIS was very disagreeable after supper that evening. I think it was the stew that upset him. George and I left him in the boat, and agreed to go for a walk round Henley. He said he would have a glass

of whisky and a pipe, and fix things up for the night. We were to shout when we returned, and he would row over from the island and fetch us.

"Don't go to sleep, old man," we said as we started, and he promised that he would not.

Henley was getting ready for the boat races, and was full of people. We met a good number of men we knew about the town, and, in their pleasant company, the time slipped by quickly. It was nearly eleven o'clock before we set off on our four-mile walk home—as we had learned to call our little boat by now.

It was a cold, unpleasant night, with a thin rain falling, and as we walked through the dark, silent fields, talking low to each other, and wondering if we were on the right path or not, we thought of the comfortable boat, with the bright light streaming through the tight-drawn canvas, of Harris and Montmorency, and the whisky, and wished we were there.

We imagined ourselves inside, tired and a little hungry, of the gloomy river and the shapeless trees, and our dear little boat, so warm and cheerful. We could see ourselves at supper there, eating cold meat, and passing each other the bread, we could hear the cheerful clatter of our knives, the laughing voices, filling all the space, and overflowing through the opening into the night. We hurried on to make it all come true.

We struck the path at last, and that made us happy, because, before this, we had not been sure whether we were walking towards the river or away from it, and when you are tired and want to go to bed, uncertainties like that worry you. We passed Shiplake as the clock was striking a quarter to twelve, and then George said thoughtfully



We struck the path at last

"You don't remember which of the islands it was, do you?"

"No," I replied, beginning to grow thoughtful too, "I don't. How many are there?"

"Only four," answered George. "It will be all right if he's awake."

We shouted when we came opposite the first island, but there was no response, so we went on to the second, and tried there, but obtained the same result.

"Oh! I remember now," said George, "it was the third one."

We ran on hopefully to the third one, and shouted again.

No answer!

The case was becoming serious. It was now past midnight. The hotels at Shiplake and Henley would be full, and we could not go round knocking up cottagers and householders in the middle of the night, to know if they let apartments. George suggested walking back to Henley and assaulting a policeman, so getting a night's lodging in the police station. But then there was the thought, "Suppose he only hits us back and refuses to lock us up!"

We could not pass the whole night fighting policemen. Moreover, we did not want to overdo it, and be put in prison for six months.

We despairingly tried what seemed in the darkness to be the fourth island, but met with no better success. The rain was coming down fast now, and evidently meant to continue. We were wet to the skin, cold and miserable. We began to wonder whether there were only four islands or more, or whether we were near the islands at all, or whether we were within a mile of where we ought to be, or

in the wrong part of the river altogether, everything looked so strange and different in the darkness

Just when we had given up all hope, I suddenly caught sight, a little way below us, of a strange, ghostly sort of light flickering among the trees on the opposite bank. At first I thought it must really be made by ghosts, but the next moment it struck me that it was our boat, and I sent up such a yell across the water that made the night seem to shake in its bed

We waited breathless for a minute, and then—oh! heavenly music of the darkness!—we heard the answering bark of Montmorency. We shouted back loud enough to wake the dead, and, after what seemed an hour, but what was really, I suppose, about five minutes, we saw the lighted boat creeping slowly over the blackness, and heard Harris's voice asking sleepily where we were

There was an unaccountable strangeness about Harris. It was something more than ordinary tiredness. He pulled the boat against a part of the bank where it was quite impossible for us to get into it, and immediately went to sleep. It took us an immense amount of screaming and roaring to wake him up, and put some sense into him, but we succeeded at last, and got safely on board.

Harris was wearing a sad expression, so we noticed, when we got into the boat. He gave you the idea of a man who had been through trouble. We asked him if anything had happened, and he said "Swans!"

It seemed that we had anchored close to a swan's nest, and soon after George and I had gone, the female swan came back, and was very angry when she found the boat. Harris had driven her off, and

she had gone away to fetch the male bird Harris said that he had had quite a fight with those two swans, but courage and skill had conquered in the end, and he had defeated them

Half an hour afterwards they returned with eighteen other swans! It must have been a fearful battle, so far as we could understand Harris's account of it The swans had tried to drag him and Montmorency out of the boat and drown them, and he had defended himself like a hero for four hours, and had killed all of them, and they had struggled away to die

"How many swans did you say there were?" asked George

"Thirty-two," replied Harris sleepily

"You said eighteen just now," said George

"No, I didn't," answered Harris, "I said twelve Do you think I can't count?"

We never found out the true facts about those swans We questioned Harris on the subject in the morning, and he said, "What swans?" and seemed to think that George and I had been dreaming

It was delightful to be safe in the boat after all our fears We ate a hearty supper, George and I, and we should have had a drink afterwards if we could have found the whisky, but we could not We examined Harris as to what he had done with it, but he did not seem to know what we meant by "whisky," or what we were talking about Montmorency looked as if he knew something, but said nothing

I slept well that night, and should have slept better if it had not been for Harris At least a dozen times during the night I was awakened by him wandering about the boat with the lantern, looking

for his clothes. He seemed to be worrying about his clothes all night.

Twice he pushed George and myself out of the way to see if we were lying on his trousers. George was wild the second time.

"What on earth do you want your trousers for in the middle of the night?" he asked angrily. "Why don't you lie down and go to sleep?"

I found him in trouble, the next time I woke, because he could not find his socks, and my last dim remembrance is of being rolled on my side, and of hearing Harris muttering something about it being an extraordinary thing where his umbrella could have disappeared to.

We woke late the next morning, had a simple breakfast, and then we cleaned up and put everything straight. At about ten we set off on what we had determined should be a good day's journey.

We agreed that we should row this morning, and Harris thought that the best arrangement would be that George and I should take the oars and he should steer. I did not like this idea at all, I said that I thought Harris would have been showing a more proper spirit if he had suggested that he and George should work, and let me rest for a while. It seemed to me that I was doing more than my fair share of work on this trip, and I was beginning to feel strongly on the subject.

It always seems to me that I am doing more work than I should do. It is not that I object to work, I like it. I can sit and look at it for hours. You cannot give me too much work. Moreover, I am careful of my work and take a great pride in it.

But, though I am eager for work, I still like to be just. I do not ask for more than my correct share,

but I get it without asking for it—at least, so it appears to me—and this worries me

George says he does not think that I need to trouble myself on the subject. He thinks it is only my imagination that makes me fear that I am having more than my share, and that, as a matter of fact, I do not do half as much as I ought to do

In a boat I have always noticed that it is the fixed idea of each member of the crew that he is doing everything. Harris thought that it was he alone who had been working, and that both George and I had been idle. George, on the other hand, laughed at the idea of Harris having done anything more than eat and sleep, and firmly believed that it was he—George himself—who had done all the labour worth speaking of

He said that he had never seen such a pair of lazy creatures as Harris and I

That amused Harris

“Fancy George talking about work!” he laughed, “why, about half an hour of it would kill him. Have you ever seen George work?” he added, turning to me

I agreed with Harris that I never had—most certainly not since we had started on this trip

“Well, I don’t understand how *you* can know much about it, one way or the other,” George replied to Harris, “for you have been asleep half the time. Have you ever seen Harris fully awake except at meal-times?” asked George, addressing me

Truth compelled me to support George. Harris had been of very little help in the boat from the beginning

“Well, anyhow, I’ve done more than old J,” said Harris

"You couldn't possibly have done less," added George

"I suppose J thinks he is the passenger," continued Harris

That was their gratitude to me for having brought them and their wretched old boat all the way up the river from Kingston, and for having managed every thing for them, and taken care of them, and slaved for them It is the way of the world

CHAPTER 14

CHIEFLY ABOUT BOATING

It was finally agreed on this occasion that Harris and George should row up past Reading, and that I should take a turn after that Pulling a heavy boat against a strong stream has few attractions for me now There was a time, long ago, when I used to demand the hard work now I like to give the younger men a chance

I notice that most of the old river hands are similarly modest whenever there is any hard rowing to be done You can always tell the old river hand by the way in which he stretches himself out upon the cushions at the bottom of the boat, and encourages the rowers by telling them marvellous tales about the wonderful deeds he performed the year before

"Do you call what you are doing hard work?" he asks, addressing the two sweating beginners, who have been pulling steadily up-stream for the last

hour and a half, "why, Jim Biffles and I, last year, pulled up from Marlow to Goring in one afternoon—never stopped once Do you remember that, Jack?"

Jack, who has made himself a bed of all the rugs and coats he can collect, and who has been lying there asleep for the last two hours, half wakes on being thus appealed to, and recollects all about the matter, and also remembers that there was an unusually strong wind against them all the way

"About thirty-four miles, I suppose, it must have been," adds the first speaker, reaching for another cushion to put under his head

"No—no, don't exaggerate, Tom," murmurs Jack, "thirty-three at the most"

Then Jack and Tom, quite exhausted by this conversational effort, fall asleep once more, and the two simple-minded youngsters feel quite proud of being allowed to row such wonderful oarsmen as Jack and Tom, and pull away harder than ever

When I was a young man, I used to listen to these tales from my elders, and believe every word of them, but the new generation does not seem to have the simple faith of the old times

We—George, Harris and myself—took a beginner with us once last season, and we told him all the usual stories about the wonderful things we had done on the river We also added seven completely original ones that we had invented, one of which was a story that a child could easily have believed

Yet that young man mocked at them all, and wanted us to repeat our amazing deeds then and there

We began to chat about our rowing experiences this morning, and to tell stories of our first efforts in

the art of oarsmanship The earliest thing I can remember of my own efforts in boating is of five of us paying threepence each and taking out a strangely built vessel on the Regent's Park lake, afterwards drying ourselves in the park keeper's house

After that, I did a good deal of rafting¹ in different brickfields This is an exercise which provides more interest and excitement than might be imagined, especially when you are in the middle of the pond and the owner of the materials of which the raft is built suddenly appears on the bank, with a big stick in his hand

Your first feeling on seeing this gentleman is that you don't feel you want company or conversation, and that, if you could do so without seeming rude, you would rather avoid meeting him, and your aim is, therefore, to get off on the opposite side of the pond to which he is, and to go home quietly and quickly, pretending not to see him He, on the contrary, is longing to take you by the hand, and talk to you

It appears that he knows your father, and is well acquainted with yourself, but this does not draw you towards him He says he'll teach you to take his boards and make a raft of them,² but since you know how to do this fairly well already, the offer seems an unnecessary one, and you are unwilling to put him to any trouble by accepting it

His desire to meet you, however, is clear, and the energetic way in which he runs quickly up and down the pond so as to be on the spot to meet you when you land is really quite complimentary

¹ A raft A number of pieces of timber fastened together, which will float on the water

² "He'll teach you" in this sentence means "He'll teach you *not* to "

If he is stout and short-winded, you can easily avoid him, but, when he is youthful and long-legged, you are obliged to meet him. The interview is, however, extremely brief, most of the conversation being on his part, and as soon as you can tear yourself away you do so.

I devoted about three months to rafting, and being then as skilful as there was any need to be in that branch of the art, I determined to go in for rowing itself, and joined one of the Lea boating clubs.

Being out on the River Lea, especially on Saturday afternoons, when it is crowded, soon makes you able to handle a boat, and clever at escaping being run down and sunk by larger boats.

George never went near the water till he was sixteen. Then he and eight others of about the same age went together to Kew one Saturday, with the idea of hiring a boat there, and pulling to Richmond and back. One of their number, who had once or twice taken out a boat on the Serpentine, told them it was jolly fun to go boating!

The tide was running out rapidly when they reached the landing-stage, and there was a stiff breeze blowing across the river, but this did not trouble them at all, and they proceeded to select their boat.

There was an eight-oared racing boat near by, that was the one they took a fancy to. The boatman was absent, and only his boy was in charge. The boy tried to dissuade them from taking the racing boat and showed them two or three very comfortable-looking boats for families, but those did not please them at all.

So the boy launched it, and they took off their coats and prepared to take their seats. George him-

self rowed number four. A particularly nervous boy was chosen to steer, and the rules of steering were explained to him by Joskins. Joskins himself rowed stroke, to lead the rest. He told the others that it was simple enough, all they had to do was to follow him.

They said that they were ready, and the boy on the landing-stage pushed them off.

What followed George is unable to describe in full. He has a recollection of having received, immediately on starting, a violent blow in the middle of the back from the end of number five's oar, at the same time that his own seat seemed to disappear from under him by magic, and leave him sitting on the boards. He also noticed, as a curious circumstance, that number two was at the same instant lying on his back at the bottom of the boat, with his legs in the air.

They passed under Kew Bridge, broadside, at the rate of eight miles an hour. Joskins was the only one who was rowing. George, on recovering his seat, tried to help him, but, on dipping his oar into the water, it immediately disappeared, to his great surprise, under the boat, and nearly took him with it. Then the steersman threw both rudder lines over board and burst into tears.

George never knew how they got back, but it took them just forty minutes. A dense crowd watched the entertainment from Kew Bridge with much interest, and everybody shouted out to them different advice. Three times they managed to get the boat back through the arch, and three times they were carried under it again, and every time the steersman looked up and saw the bridge above him, his tears broke out afresh.

George said that he little thought that afternoon that he should ever come to like boating

Harris is more accustomed to sea rowing than to river work, and says that, as an exercise, he prefers it I don't I remember taking out a small boat at East bourne last summer I used to do a good deal of sea rowing years ago, and I thought I should be all right, but I found that I had forgotten the art entirely When one oar was deep down underneath the water, the other would be waving madly in the air To get a grip of the water with both at the same time I had to stand up The sea-front was crowded with people and I had to pull past them in this foolish fashion I landed halfway down the beach, and hired an old boatman to take me back

I like to watch an old boatman rowing, especially when he has been hired by the hour There is something so beautifully calm and restful about his method He is not for ever trying hard to pass all the other boats If another boat passes him it does not annoy him, as a matter of fact, they all do overtake him and pass him—all those that are going his way This would trouble and vex some people, the cheerful good-temper of the hired boatman under such circumstances teaches us a beautiful lesson against pride and ambition

George said that he had often wished to take to punting¹ as a change from boating Punting is not so easy as it looks As in rowing, you soon learn how to handle the craft, but it takes long practice before you can do this with real skill

One young man I knew had a very sad accident the first time he went punting He had been getting on

¹ A punt A flat-bottomed boat, with square ends, moved by pushing with a pole against the bottom of the river

so well that he thought he knew everything, and was walking up and down the punt, working the pole carelessly. He would march to the head of the punt, push in his pole, and then run along to the other end, just like an old punter.

It would all have continued like this if he had not unfortunately, while looking round to enjoy the scenery, taken just one step more than there was any necessity for, and walked off the punt altogether. The pole was firmly fixed in the mud, and he was left clinging to it while the punt drifted away. It was a terrible position for him. A rude boy on the bank immediately called out to a friend in the distance to "hurry and see a real monkey on a stick."

I could not go to his assistance, because, as ill-luck would have it, we had not brought out another pole with us. I could only sit and look at him. I shall never forget his expression as the pole slowly sank with him, it was so sad.

I watched him gently fall down into the water, and saw him scramble out, very wet. I could not help laughing, he looked so silly. I continued to laugh to myself about it for some time, and then it was suddenly forced upon me that I had very little to laugh about when I came to think of it. Here was I, alone in a punt, without a pole, drifting helplessly down mid-stream.

I began to feel very angry with my friend for having stepped overboard in that way. He might, at least, have left me the pole.

I drifted on for about a quarter of a mile, and then I came in sight of a fishing-punt anchored in mid-stream, in which sat two old fishermen. They saw me coming towards them, and they called out to me to keep out of their way.

"I can't," I shouted back

"But you don't try," they answered

I explained the matter to them when I got nearer, and they caught me and lent me a pole. There was a waterfall not far below. I am glad those fishermen were there.

The first time I went punting was in company with three other men, they were going to show me how to do it. We could not all start together, so I said that I would go down first and get out the punt, and then I could practise until they came.

I could not get a punt that afternoon as they were all engaged, so I had nothing else to do but sit down on the bank, watching the river, and waiting for my friends.

I had not been sitting there long before my attention became attracted to a man in a punt who, I noticed with some surprise, wore a jacket and cap exactly like mine. He was evidently a beginner at punting, and his performance was most interesting. You never knew what was going to happen when he put the pole into the water, he evidently did not know himself. Sometimes he shot up-stream and sometimes he shot down-stream, and at other times he simply spun round and came up on the other side of the pole. With every result he seemed equally surprised and annoyed.

The people near the river began to get quite interested in him after a while, and tried to guess what would be the result of his next push.

In the course of time my friends arrived on the opposite bank, and they stopped and watched him too. His back was towards them, and they saw only his jacket and cap. From this they immediately jumped to the conclusion that it was I, their beloved

companion, who was providing the entertainment, and their delight knew no bounds. They commenced to joke about him unmercifully.

I did not grasp their mistake at first, and I thought, "How rude of them to say such things about a perfect stranger," but, before I could call out and reproach them, the explanation of the matter struck me, and I withdrew behind a tree.

Oh, how they enjoyed themselves, making fun of that poor man! For more than five minutes they stood there, shouting amusing remarks at him, laughing at him, mocking him, until at last, unable to bear their brutal jokes any longer, he turned round on them, and they saw his face!

I was glad to notice that they had sufficient politeness left to look very foolish. They explained to him that they thought he was someone they knew. They said that they hoped that he would not consider them capable of so insulting anyone except a personal friend of their own.

Of course their having mistaken him for a friend excused it. I remember Harris telling me once of a bathing adventure he had at Boulogne. He was swimming about there near the beach, when he felt himself suddenly seized by the back of the neck, and forcibly plunged under water. He struggled violently, but whoever had got hold of him seemed to have the strength of a giant, and all his efforts to escape were useless. He had given up kicking, and was trying to turn his thoughts to solemn things, when his captor released him.

He regained his feet, and looked round for his would-be murderer. He was standing close by him, laughing heartily, but the moment he caught sight of

Harris's face, as it came out of the water, he started back and seemed quite embarrassed

"I really beg your pardon," he stammered in confusion, "but I took you for a friend of mine"

Harris thought that it was lucky for him that the man had not mistaken him for a relation, or he would probably have been drowned outright

CHAPTER 15

THE ART OF FISHING

WE came in sight of Reading about eleven The river is dirty and uninteresting here One does not stay long in the neighbourhood of Reading

At a little distance from Reading we came up with a steam launch, belonging to some friends of mine, and they towed us up to within about a mile of Streatley It is very pleasant being towed by a launch I prefer it to rowing The run would have been more pleasant still if it had not been for a number of wretched small boats that were continually getting in the way of our launch, and, to avoid running them down, we had to be continually easing and stopping It is really most annoying, the manner in which these rowing boats get in the way of one's launch up the river, something ought to be done about it, they should be stopped

They are so extremely rude, too You can whistle till you nearly burst your boiler before they will trouble themselves to hurry I would have one or two

of them run down now and then, just to teach them all a lesson

My friend's launch cast us loose just below Pangbourne, and then Harris wanted to make me believe that it was my turn to pull. This seemed to me most unreasonable. It had been arranged in the morning that I should bring the boat up to three miles above Reading. Well, here we were, ten miles above Reading! Surely it was now their turn again.

I could not persuade either George or Harris to see the matter in its proper light, however, so, to save argument, I took the oars.

Goring on the left bank and Streatley on the right are both charming places to stay at for a few days. We had intended to go on to Wallingford that day, but the sweet smiling face of the river here tempted us to linger for a while, and so we left our boat at the bridge, and went into Streatley for lunch, much to Montmorency's satisfaction.

It is said that the hills on each side of the stream here once joined and formed a barrier across what is now the Thames, and that then the river ended there above Goring in one vast lake. I cannot either deny or agree with this statement. I simply offer it.

Streatley is an ancient place, dating back, like most riverside towns and villages, to British and Saxon times. Goring is not nearly so pretty a little place to stop at as Streatley, if you have your choice, but it is fair enough, and is nearer the railway in case you want to slip off without paying your hotel bill!

We stayed for two days at Streatley, and had our clothes washed. We had tried to wash them ourselves in the river, under George's supervision, and it had been a failure. Indeed, it had been more than a failure, because we were worse off after we had

washed our clothes than we were before. Before we had washed them, they had been very, very dirty, it is true, but they were just wearable. After we had washed them—well, the river between Reading and Henley was much cleaner after we had washed our clothes in it, than it was before. All the dirt contained in the river between Reading and Henley we collected, during that wash, and worked it into our clothes.

The washerwoman at Streatley said that she felt she owed it to herself to charge us three times the usual prices for that wash. She said that it had not been like washing, it had been more like digging.

We paid the bill without a murmur.

The neighbourhood of Streatley and Goring is a great fishing centre. There is some excellent fishing to be had there. The river abounds in pike, roach, dace, gudgeon and eels,¹ and you can sit and fish for them all day.

Some people do. They never catch them. I never knew anybody catch anything up the Thames, except the smallest minnows and dead cats, but that has nothing to do, of course, with fishing! The local fisherman's guide does not say a word about catching anything. All it says is that the place is "a good station for fishing", and, from what I have seen of the district, I am quite prepared to confirm this statement.

There is no place in the world where you can get more fishing, or where you can fish for a longer period. Some fishermen come here and fish for a day, and others stop and fish for a month. You can stay and fish for a year, if you want to—the result will be the same.

¹ Different kinds of fresh-water fish

The *Fisherman's Guide to the Thames* says that "jack and perch¹ are also to be had about here," but there the *Fisherman's Guide* is wrong. Jack and perch may *be* about there. Indeed, I know for a fact that they are. You can *see* them there in large numbers, when you are out for a walk along the banks. They come and stand half out of the water with their mouths open for biscuits, and, if you go for a bathe, they crowd round, and get in your way and make you angry. But they are not to be "had" by a little worm on the end of a hook, or anything like it.

I am not a good fisherman myself. I devoted a considerable amount of time to the subject at one period, and was, as I thought, making good progress, but older and more experienced fishermen told me that I should never be any real good at it, and advised me to give it up. They said that I could throw the line neatly enough, that I seemed to have plenty of commonsense for it, and quite enough natural laziness, but they were sure that I should never make anything of a fisherman. I had not sufficient imagination.

They said that as a poet, or an author, or a newspaper reporter, or anything of that kind, I might be satisfactory, but that, to gain any importance as a Thames fisherman, I should need more imagination, more power of invention than I appeared to possess.

Some people believe that all that is required to make a good fisherman is the ability to tell lies easily and without blushing, but this is a mistake. Plain, undisguised lying is useless, even a beginner can do that. It is in the descriptive detail, the touches of

¹ Fresh-water fish

probability, the general air of truth, that the experienced fisherman excels

Anybody can come in and say, "Oh, I caught fifteen dozen perch yesterday evening", or, "Last Monday I landed a gudgeon, weighing eighteen pounds, and measuring three feet from the tip to the tail "

There is no art, no skill, required for that sort of thing. It shows courage, but that is all

No, your clever fisherman would never tell a lie that way. His method is a study in itself

He comes in quietly with his hat on, sits in the most comfortable chair, lights his pipe, and commences to puff in silence. He lets the youngsters talk about themselves for a while, and then, during a momentary pause, he removes the pipe from his mouth, and remarks, as he knocks the ashes out of his pipe

"Well, I had a good catch on Tuesday evening but it's not much good my telling you about it "

"Oh! Why's that?" they ask

"Because if I did, I don't expect anybody would believe me," replies the old man calmly, and without any bitterness in his tone, as he refills his pipe and asks the landlord to bring him a drink

There is a pause after this, nobody feeling sufficiently sure of himself to contradict the old gentleman. So he has to continue by himself without any encouragement

"No," he says thoughtfully, "I shouldn't believe it myself if anybody told it to me, but it's a fact for all that. I had been sitting there all the afternoon and had caught almost nothing—except a few dozen dace and a score of jack, and I was just making up my mind to go home when I suddenly felt a rather

sharp pull at the line I thought it was another little one, and I went to pull it up. Hang me, if I could move the rod! It took me half-an-hour—half-an-hour, sir!—to land that fish, and every moment I thought the line was going to break! I got him out at last, and what do you think he was? A sturgeon! a forty-pound sturgeon! taken on a line, sir. Yes, you may well look surprised—I'll have another drink, landlord, please."

Then he goes on to tell of the astonishment of everybody who saw it, and what his wife said, when he got home, and of what the neighbours thought about it.

I asked the landlord of an inn up the river once, if it did not injure him, sometimes, listening to the tales that the fishermen there told him, and he said

"Oh, no, not now, sir. It used to startle me a little at first, but the wife and I listen to them all day now. It's what you are used to, you know. It's what you are used to."

I knew a young man once who was a most honest person, and, when he took to fly-fishing, he determined never to exaggerate his catches by more than twenty-five per cent.

"When I have caught forty fish," said he, "then I will tell people that I have caught fifty, and so on. But I will not lie any more than that, because it is sinful to lie."

Unfortunately, the twenty-five per cent plan did not work well at all. He was never able to use it. The greatest number of fish that he ever caught in one day was three, and you cannot add twenty-five per cent to three—at least, not in fish.

So he increased his percentage to thirty three and

a third, but that again was difficult when he had only caught one or two, so, to simplify matters, he made up his mind just to double the quantity

He kept to this arrangement for a couple of months, and then he grew dissatisfied with it. No body believed him when he told them that he only doubled, and therefore he gained no credit whatever that way, while his attempt to be more honest than the rest put him at a disadvantage among the other fishermen. When he had really caught three small fish, and said that he had caught six, it used to make him quite jealous to hear a man, who, he knew, had caught only one, going about telling people that he had landed a dozen.

So, finally, he made an arrangement with himself which he has held to ever since, and that was to count each fish that he caught as ten, and to pretend to possess ten to begin with. For example, if he did not catch any fish at all, then he said that he had caught ten fish—you could never catch less than ten fish by his system, that was the foundations of it. Then, if by any chance he really did catch one fish, he called it twenty, while two fish would count thirty, three forty, and so on.

It is a simple plan, and he found that it worked very well. There was even some talk of its being generally used, but some of the older fishermen opposed it. They said that they would consider the idea if the number were doubled, and each fish counted as twenty.

CHAPTER 16

MORE ABOUT FISHING

It is always very interesting, on an evening up the river, to pay a visit to one of the little inns there, and take a seat in the room where drinks are served. You will be almost sure to meet one or two old fishermen, and they will tell you enough fishy stories in half-an-hour to make you feel unwell for a month.

George and I—I don't know what had become of Harris, he had gone out early in the afternoon—George and I, therefore, and the dog, left to ourselves, went for a walk to Wallingford on the second evening of our stay at Streatley, and, coming home, we called in at a little riverside inn.

We went into the sitting-room, and sat down. There was an old fellow there, smoking a long clay pipe, and we naturally began chatting.

He told us that it had been a fine day to-day, and we told him that it had been a fine day yesterday, and then we all told each other that we thought it would be a fine day to-morrow, and George said that the crops would be coming up well. After that, it came out somehow that we were strangers in the neighbourhood, and that we were going away the next morning.

Then a pause followed in the conversation, during which our eyes wandered round the room. They finally rested upon a dusty old glass-case, fixed very high up above the chimney-piece, and containing a trout.¹ It filled me with wonder, that trout, it was

¹ A trout. A small fresh-water fish.

such a monstrous fish. In fact, at first glance, I thought it was a cod.¹

"Ah!" said the old gentleman, following the direction of my gaze; "a fine fellow that, isn't he?"

"Quite uncommon," I murmured; and George asked the old man how much he thought it weighed.

"Eighteen pounds, six ounces," said our friend,



A remarkably fine trout

rising and taking down his coat. "Yes," he continued, "it was sixteen years ago, on the third of next month, that I landed him. I caught him just below the bridge. They told me he was in the river, and I said that I'd have him, and so I did. You don't see many fish that size about here now, I'm thinking. Good night, gentlemen, good night."

¹ A cod: A large sea fish.

And hé went out, and left us alone

We could not take our eyes off that fish after that. It really was a remarkably fine fish. We were still looking at it when the carrier of the village, who had just stopped at the inn, came to the door of the room, and he also looked at the fish.

"A good-sized trout, that," said George, turning round to him.

"Ah! you may well say that, sir," replied the man, and then he added, "maybe you weren't here, sir, when that fish was caught?"

"No," we told him. We were strangers in the neighbourhood.

"Ah!" said the carrier, "then, of course, how should you? It was nearly five years ago that I caught that trout."

"Oh! was it you who caught it, then?" said I.

"Yes, sir," said the pleasant old fellow. "I caught him just below the lock¹—or, at least what was the lock then—one Friday afternoon. I'd gone out pike fishing, bless you, never thinking of a trout, and when I saw that giant on the end of my line, I was quite startled. Well, you see, he weighed twenty-six pounds. Good night, gentlemen, good night."

Five minutes afterwards, a third man came in and described how *he* had caught it early one morning, and then he left, and a solemn-looking, middle-aged man came in, and sat down near the window.

None of us spoke for a while, but, at length, George turned to the newcomer, and said

"I beg your pardon, I hope you will forgive the liberty that we—perfect strangers in the neighbourhood—are taking, but my friend and I would be so

¹ A lock. An enclosed part of a canal or river, for raising or lowering boats.

much obliged if you would tell us how you caught that trout up there "

"Why, who told you that I caught that trout!" was the surprised reply

We said that nobody had told us so, but somehow or other we felt that it was he who had done it

"Well, it's a most remarkable thing—most remarkable," answered the stranger, laughing, "because, as a matter of fact, you are quite right I did catch it But fancy you guessing it like that Dear me, it's really a most remarkable thing "

Then he went on to tell us how it had taken him half-an-hour to land it, and how it had broken his rod He said that he had weighed it carefully when he reached home, and that it had turned the scale at thirty-four pounds

He went in his turn, and, when he was gone, the landlord came in to us We told him the various histories we had heard about his trout, and he was immensely amused, and we all laughed very heartily

"Fancy Jim Bates and Joe Muggles and Mr Jones and old Billy Maunders all telling you that they had caught it Ha! Ha! Ha! Well that is good," said the honest old fellow, laughing heartily "Yes, they are the sort to give it to *me*, to put up in *my* parlour, if *they* had caught it, they are Ha! Ha! Ha!"

Then he told us the real history of the fish It seemed that he had caught it himself, years ago, when he was quite a lad, not by any art or skill, but by that unaccountable luck that appears always to wait upon a boy when he stays away from school without permission, and goes out fishing on a sunny afternoon, with a piece of string tied on to the end of a tree

He said that bringing home that trout had saved

him from being punished, and that even his school master had said that it was worth a good many lessons

He was called out of the room at this point, and George and I again turned our gaze upon the fish

It really was a most astonishing trout. The more we looked at it, the more we marvelled at it.

It excited George so much that he climbed up on the back of a chair to get a better view of it.

And then the chair slipped, and George clutched wildly at the trout-case to save himself, and down it came with a crash, George and the chair on top of it.

"You haven't injured the fish, have you?" I cried in alarm, rushing up.

"I hope not," said George, rising cautiously and looking about.

But he had. The trout lay shattered into a thousand pieces—I say a thousand, but they may have been only nine hundred. I did not count them.

We thought it strange and unaccountable that a stuffed trout should break up into little pieces like that.

And so it would have been strange and unaccountable, if it had been a stuffed trout, but it was not.

That trout was plaster-of-Paris.

CHAPTER 17

FROM STREATLEY TO OXFORD

WE left Streatley early the next morning, and pulled up to Culham, and slept in the backwater there.

The river is not extraordinarily interesting between Streatley and Wallingford. From Cleve you get a stretch of six and a half miles without a lock. I believe this is the longest uninterrupted stretch anywhere above Teddington, and the Oxford Rowing Club make use of it.

But however satisfactory this absence of locks may be to rowing-men, it is to be regretted by the mere pleasure seeker.

I myself am fond of locks. They pleasantly break the sameness of the trip. I like sitting in the boat and slowly rising out of the cool depths up to the new reaches and fresh views, or sinking down, as it were, out of the world, and then waiting, while the gloomy gates creak, and the narrow strip of daylight between them widens till the fair smiling river lies full before you, and you push your little boat out from its brief prison on to the welcoming waters once again.

They are picturesque little spots, these locks. The stout old lock-keeper, or his cheerful-looking wife, or bright-eyed daughter, are pleasant people to have a passing chat with. You meet other boats there, and river talk is exchanged. The Thames would not be the fairyland it is without its flower-covered locks.

Talking of locks reminds me of an accident. George and I very nearly had one summer's morning at Hampton Court.

It was a glorious day, and the lock was crowded, and, as is a common practice up the river, a hopeful photographer was taking a picture of us all as we lay upon the rising waters.

I did not notice what was taking place at first, and was, therefore, extremely surprised to see George

hurriedly smooth his trousers and his hair, put his cap on the back of his head, and then, with an expression which was a mixture of friendliness and sadness sit down gracefully and try to hide his feet

My first idea was that he had suddenly caught sight of some lady he knew, and I looked about to see who it was. Everybody in the lock seemed to have been suddenly turned to stone. They were all standing or sitting in the most unusual and curious positions that I have ever seen. All the girls were smiling. Oh, they did look so sweet! And all the men were frowning, and looking stern and noble.

Then, at last, the truth flashed across me, and I wondered if I should be in time. Ours was the first boat, and it would be unkind of me to spoil the man's picture, I thought.

I faced round quickly, and took up a position in the nose of the boat, where I leant with careless grace upon the boathook in a position suggesting both activity and strength. I arranged my hair with a curl over my forehead, and gave an air of gentle thoughtfulness to my expression, mixed with a touch of scorn which, I am told, suits me.

As we stood, waiting for the eventful moment, I heard someone behind me call out:

"Hi! look at your nose."

I could not turn round to see what was the matter, and whose nose it was that was to be looked at. I stole a side-glance at George's nose. It was all right—at all events, there was nothing wrong with it that could be altered. I looked down at my own, and that seemed all that could be expected also.

"Look at your nose, you stupid ass!" came the voice again, louder.

And then another voice cried

"Push your nose out, can't you—you two with the dog!"

Neither George nor I dared to turn round. The man's hand was on the cap of the camera and the picture might be taken at any moment. Was it us they were calling out to? What was the matter with our noses? Why were they to be pushed out?

But now the whole lock started yelling, and a powerful voice from the back shouted

"Look at your boat, sir, you in the red and black caps. It's your two dead bodies that will get taken in the picture, if you aren't quick."

We looked then and saw that the nose of our boat had got fixed under the woodwork of the lock while the incoming water was rising all around it, and lifting it up. In another moment we should be over. Quick as thought, we each seized an oar, and a powerful blow against the side of the lock released the boat, and sent us flat on our backs on the floor.

We did not come out well in that photograph, George and I. Of course, as was to be expected, it was our luck that the man should set his wretched camera in motion at the exact moment that we were lying on our backs with a wild expression of "Where am I?" and "What is it?" on our faces, and our four feet waving madly in the air.

Our feet were undoubtedly the chief feature in that photograph. Indeed, very little else was to be seen. They filled up the foreground completely. Behind them, you caught glimpses of the other boats and of the surrounding scenery, but everything and everybody else in the lock looked so unimportant and small compared with our feet, that all the other people felt quite ashamed of themselves and refused to buy the picture.

The owner of one steam launch, who had ordered six copies, reversed the order when he saw the picture. He said he would take them if anybody could show him his launch, but nobody could. It was somewhere behind George's left foot.

There was a good deal of unpleasantness over the business. The photographer said that we ought to take a dozen copies each, seeing that the photo was about nine-tenths us, but we refused. We said that we had no objection to being photographed full-length, but we preferred being taken the right way up.

From Wallingford up to Dorchester, the neighbourhood of the river grows more hilly, varied, and picturesque. Dorchester stands half a mile from the river. It can be reached best by leaving the river near the lock, and walking across the fields. Dorchester is a delightfully peaceful old place, lying in stillness and silence and sleep.

Round Clifton Hampden, itself a wonderfully pretty village, old fashioned, peaceful, and beautiful with flowers, the river scenery is rich and gorgeous. There is an old inn there, standing on the right of the bridge, away from the village. It has a story-book appearance, while inside it is even more like something in a book.

It would not be a good place for the heroine of a modern novel to stay at. The heroine of a modern novel is always "divinely tall," and she is ever "drawing herself up to her full height." At this old-fashioned inn she would strike her head against the ceiling each time she did this.

We were up early the next morning, as we wanted to be in Oxford by the afternoon. It is surprising how early one *can* get up, when camping out. One

does not wish for just another five minutes nearly so much, lying wrapped up in a rug, with a leather suitcase for a pillow, as one does in a feather-bed. We had finished breakfast, and were through Clifton Lock by half-past eight.

From Clifton, for some time, the river banks are flat and uninteresting, but later the landscape improves and becomes really beautiful again. Iffley Lock and Mill, a mile before you reach Oxford, is a favourite subject with river-loving painters. The real thing, however, is rather disappointing after the pictures. Few things, I have noticed, are quite as good as the pictures of them in this world.

We passed through Iffley Lock at about half-past twelve, and then, having cleaned up the boat, and made all ready for landing, we set to work on our last mile. Between Iffley and Oxford is the most difficult part of the river I know. You want to be born on that bit of water to understand it. I have been over it a good number of times, but I have never been able to master it. First the current drives you on to the right bank, and then on to the left, then it takes you out into the middle, turns you round three times, and carries you up-stream again, and always ends by trying to break you into pieces against a college barge.¹

Of course, as a result of this, we got in the way of a good many other boats during the mile, and, of course, as a result of that, a good deal of bad language occurred.

I don't know why it should be so, but everybody is always so extraordinarily bad-tempered on the river. Little misfortunes, that you would scarcely notice on dry land, drive you nearly mad with rage.

¹ A large boat moored by the side of the river.

when they occur on the water When Harris or George makes an ass of himself on dry land, I smile in a kindly way, when they behave in an empty headed manner on the river, I use the most terrifying language to them When another boat gets in my way, I feel I want to take an oar and kill all the people in it

It must be that the air of the river has a weakening effect upon one's temper, and it is this, I suppose, which makes even the mildest tempered people, when on land, become violent and blood-thirsty when in a boat

CHAPTER 18

CONCERNING UP-RIVER BOATS

WE spent two very pleasant days at Oxford There are plenty of dogs in the town of Oxford Montmorancy had eleven fights on the first day, and fourteen on the second, and evidently thought he had got to heaven

Among people too naturally weak, or too naturally lazy, whichever it may be, to have a taste for up-stream work, it is a common practice to get a boat at Oxford, and row down For the energetic, however, the up-stream journey is certainly to be preferred It does not seem good to be always going with the current There is more satisfaction in straightening one's back, and fighting against it, and winning one's way forward in spite of it—at least, so I feel, when Harris and George are rowing and I am steering

To those who do think of making Oxford their

starting-place, I would say, take your own boat. The boats that, as a rule, are let for hire on the Thames above Marlow, are very good boats. They are fairly water-tight, and, so long as they are handled with care, they rarely come to pieces, or sink. There are places in them to sit down on, and they are complete with all the necessary arrangements—or nearly all—to enable you to row them and steer them.

But they are not beautiful to look at. The boat you hire up the river above Marlow is not the sort of boat in which you can dash about and give yourself airs. The hired up-river boat very soon puts a stop to any nonsense of that sort on the part of its occupants. That is its chief—one may say its only—recommendation.

The man in the hired up-river boat is modest and retiring. He likes to keep on the shady side underneath the trees, and to do most of his travelling early in the morning or late at night, when there are not many people about on the river to look at him.

When the man in the hired up-river boat sees anyone he knows, he gets out on to the bank, and hides behind a tree.

I was one of a party who hired an up-river boat one summer, for a few days' trip. We had none of us ever seen the hired up-river boat before, and we did not know what it was when we did see it.

We had written for a boat, and when we went down with our bags to the yard, and gave our names, the man said

"Oh, yes, you're the party that wrote to me. It's all right. Jim, fetch round *The Pride of the Thames*."

The boy went away and reappeared five minutes afterwards, struggling with an ancient piece of wood

that looked as if it had just been dug out of somewhere, and dug out so carelessly that it had been unnecessarily damaged

My own idea, on first catching sight of the object, was that it was a Roman relic¹ of some sort—a relic of *what* I do not know, possibly of a coffin²

The neighbourhood of the upper Thames is rich in Roman relics, and my idea seemed to me a very probable one, but a serious-minded member of our party, who was something of a geologist,³ said that it was clear even to the poorest intelligence that the thing the boy had found was the remains of a whale,⁴ and he pointed out to us various pieces of evidence to prove it

To settle the argument, we appealed to the boy. We told him not to be afraid, but to speak the plain truth. Was it the remains of a whale, or was it an early Roman coffin?

The boy said that it was *The Pride of the Thames*

We thought this was a very humorous answer on the part of the boy at first, and somebody gave him twopence as a reward for his quick wit, but when he continued to keep up the joke, as we thought, too long, we became vexed with him

“Come, come, my lad!” said our captain sharply, “don’t let us have any more of this nonsense. You take this old barrel away, and bring us a boat.”

The boat-builder himself came up then, and assured us, on his word, as a practical man, that the thing really was a boat—was, in fact, *the* boat which had been chosen to take us on our trip down the river

¹ Relic Something left from the past

² Coffin The box in which a dead person is buried

³ A geologist A scientist who studies the formation of the earth’s surface

⁴ A whale The largest sea-monster

We complained loudly. We thought that he might, at least, have had it white-washed or painted to show the difference between it and a bit of a wreck, but he could not see any fault in it.

He even seemed angry at our remarks. He said that he had picked us out the best boat he possessed, and he thought that we might have been more grateful.

He said that *The Pride of the Thames* had been in use, just as it now stood (or rather as it now hung together), for the last forty years, to *his* knowledge, and nobody had complained of it before, and he did not see why we should be the first to begin.

We argued no more.

We fastened the so-called boat together with some pieces of string, got some wall-paper to hide the worst-looking places, said our prayers, and stepped on board.

It cost us thirty-five shillings to hire that wreck for six days, and we could have bought it at a sale any day for four.

CHAPTER 19

THE RETURN JOURNEY

THE weather changed on the third day, and we started from Oxford upon our homeward journey in the midst of a steady rain.

The river, with the sunlight flashing from its dancing wavelets, turning to gold the grey-green tree-

trunks, glinting through the dark, cool paths of the wood, silvering walls and bridges, brightening every small village, making sweet each lane and meadow, peeping, laughing, from each inlet, shining gaily on many a fair sail, making soft the air with its glory, is a golden fairy stream

But the river—chill and weary, with the ceaseless raindrops falling on its brown, slow-moving waters, with the sound as of a woman weeping low in some dark chamber, while the woods, all dark and silent, wrapped in their mists of vapour, stand like ghosts upon the bank, silent ghosts with reproachful eyes, like the ghosts of evil actions, like the ghosts of friends neglected—is gloomy and depressing

Sunlight is the life-blood of Nature. Mother Earth looks at us with dull, soulless eyes when the sunlight has died away from out of her. It makes us sad to be with her then. She does not seem to know us or to care for us. She is like a widow who has lost the husband she loved, and her children touch her hand, and look up into eyes, but gain no smile from her.

We rowed on all that day through the rain, and very miserable work it was. We pretended, at first, that we enjoyed it. We said that it was a change, and that we liked to see the river under all its different appearances. We said that we could not expect to have it all sunshine, nor should we wish it. We told each other that Nature was beautiful, even in her tears.

Indeed, Harris and I were quite enthusiastic about it for the first few hours. We even sang a song about a gipsy's life,¹ and how delightful a gipsy's existence was—free to storm and sunshine, and to

¹ A gipsy. A member of a race of people which is always moving from place to place.

every wind that blew—and how he enjoyed the rain, and what a lot of good it did him, and how he laughed at the people who didn't like it

George took the fun more seriously, and held fast to the umbrella

We put up the cover before we had lunch, and kept it up all the afternoon, just leaving a little space in the front of the boat, from which one of us could row gently and keep a look-out. In this way we covered nine miles before we stopped for the night

I cannot honestly say that we had a merry evening. The rain poured down continuously. Everything in the boat was damp. Supper was not a success. Cold meat pie, when you do not feel hungry, is distasteful. We felt that we should like a really good meal at a really good restaurant, and Harris passed the remains of his pie to Montmorency, who refused it, and, apparently insulted by the offer, went and sat over at the other end of the boat by himself

We played cards for about an hour and a half after supper, and then, getting tired of that, we mixed ourselves a hot drink and sat around and talked. George told us about a man he had known, who had come up the river two years ago, and who had slept out in a damp boat on just such another night as that was, and it had given him rheumatic fever, and nothing was able to save him, and he had died in great pain ten days afterwards. George said that he was quite a young man, and was engaged to be married. He said that it was one of the saddest things he had ever known

That reminded Harris of a friend of his who had been a soldier, and who had slept out under canvas one wet night at Aldershot, "on just such another night as this," said Harris, and he had woke up in

the morning a cripple¹ for life Harris said that he would introduce us both to the man when we got back to London, it would make our hearts bleed to see him

This naturally led to some very pleasant chat about diseases brought on by catching cold, and Harris said how difficult it would be if one of us were taken seriously ill during the night, seeing how far away we were from a doctor

There seemed to be a desire for something gay and entertaining to follow upon this conversation, and in a weak moment I suggested that George should get out his banjo, and see if he could not give us a comic song

George did not want any pressing There was no nonsense about having left his music at home, or anything of that sort He at once took out his instrument, and commenced to play "Two Lovely Black Eyes"

I had always thought of "Two Lovely Black Eyes" as a rather ordinary tune until that evening The sadness that George extracted from it quite surprised me

The desire that grew upon Harris and myself, as the song progressed, was to fall upon each other's necks and weep, but by a great effort we kept back the rising tears and listened in silence

When the chorus² came we even made a desperate attempt to be merry We refilled our glasses and joined in, Harris, in a voice trembling with feeling, leading, and George and I following a few words behind

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¹ A cripple One who has lost the use of his limbs

² Chorus A part of a song which is repeated at the end of each verse

Two lovely black eyes,
Oh! what a surprise!

There we stopped. In our present state of depression we were unable to continue. Harris sobbed like a little child, and the dog howled till I thought his heart or his jaw must surely break.

There being nothing else to do, we went to bed—that is, we undressed ourselves, and tossed about at the bottom of the boat for some three or four hours, after which we managed to get some disturbed sleep until five a m., when we all got up and had breakfast.

The second day was exactly like the first. The rain continued to pour down, and we sat, wrapped up in our raincoats, underneath the canvas, and drifted slowly along.

One of us—I forget which one now, but I rather think it was myself—made a few feeble attempts during the course of the morning to sing the old gipsy foolishness about being children of Nature and enjoying the wet, but it was not a success.

On one point we were all agreed, and that was that, come what might, we would go through with our journey to the bitter end. We had come out for a fortnight's enjoyment on the river, and a fortnight's enjoyment we meant to have. If it killed us! Well, that would be a sad thing for our relations, but it could not be helped. We felt that to give in to the weather in a climate such as ours would be a most disastrous thing to do.

"It's only two days more," said Harris, "and we are young and strong. We may get over it all right, after all."

At about four o'clock we began to discuss our arrangements for the evening. We were a little past

Goring then, and we decided to paddle on to Pangbourne, and put up there for the night

"Another jolly evening!" murmured George

We sat and thought about it. We should be in Pangbourne by five. We should finish our evening meal at, say, half-past six. After that we could walk about in the pouring rain till bed-time, or sit in the dimly-lit inn with nothing whatever to do.

"If we hadn't made up our minds to catch our certain deaths in this old coffin," said George, casting a glance of great hatred over the boat, "it might be worth while to mention that there is a train leaving Pangbourne, I know, soon after five, which would get us to town in comfortable time for a visit to the Alhambra,¹ with a little supper to follow."

Nobody spoke. We looked at one another, and each one seemed to see his own guilty thoughts reflected in the faces of the others. In silence, we dragged out and examined our bags. We looked up the river and down the river, not a soul was in sight!

Twenty minutes later, three figures, followed by an ashamed-looking dog, might have been seen creeping stealthily from the boat-house towards the station, dressed in the following costume.

Black leather shoes, dirty, suit of boating flannels, very dirty, brown hat, much worn, raincoat, very wet, umbrella.

We had deceived the boatman at Pangbourne. We had not the courage to tell him that we were running away from the rain. We had left the boat, and all it contained, in his charge, with instructions that it was to be ready for us at nine the next morning. If, we said—if anything unforeseen should

¹ The Alhambra. A London theatre.

happen to prevent our return, we would write to him

We reached London at seven, and drove direct to an excellent little restaurant I know of, where we ate of a light meal, left Montmorency, together with suggestions for a supper to be ready at half-past ten, and then continued our way to the Alhambra

Here we attracted a good deal of attention. The man in the pay-box mistook us for "the world-famous ~~contortionists~~^{contortionists}¹ from the Himalayan Mountains," told us to go round to the stage-door, and informed us that we were half-an-hour late. However, we finally persuaded him that he had made a mistake, and he took our money and let us pass.

Inside we were a still greater success. Our fine sun-burnt faces and picturesque clothes were followed round the place with admiring gaze.

It was a proud moment for us all.

We left early and made our way back to the restaurant where supper was awaiting us.

I enjoyed that supper immensely. For about ten days we seemed to have been living, more or less, on nothing but cold meat, cake, and bread and jam. It had been simple food, but there had been nothing exciting about it, and the smell of the wine and of French sauces, and the sight of clean cloths and long loaves, knocked as a very welcome visitor at the door of our inner man.

We ate and drank in silence for a while, until the time came when, instead of sitting upright, and grasping the knife and fork firmly, we leant back in our chairs and stretched out our legs beneath the table, feeling good and thoughtful and forgiving.

¹ Contortionists. People who bend their bodies into strange shapes to amuse others.

Then Harris, who was sitting near the window, drew aside the curtain and looked out upon the street

It shone darkly in the wet, the dim lamps flickered with each gust of wind, and the rain splashed steadily into the pools already lying there. A few soaked pedestrians¹ hurried past, stooping low beneath their umbrellas

"Well," said Harris, reaching out his hand for his glass, "we had a pleasant trip, and my hearty thanks for it to old Father Thames—but I think we did well to give it up when we did. Here's to Three Men well out of a Boat!"

And Montmorency, standing on his back legs before the window, looking out into the night, gave a short bark of decided agreement

¹ Pedestrians. Those who go on foot.